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THE  
HOUSE BY THE CHURCH-YARD.

BY  
J. SHERIDAN LE FANU.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:  
TINSLEY, BROTHERS, CATHERINE-ST., STRAND.  
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THE  
HOUSE BY THE CHURCH-YARD.

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CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH LILIAS HEARS A STAVE OF AN OLD SONG AND  
THERE IS A LEAVE-TAKING BESIDE THE RIVER.

DEVEREUX'S move was very sudden, and the news did not reach the Elms till his groom had gone on to Island-bridge with the horses, and he himself, booted and spurred, knocked at the door. The Doctor was not at home; he had ridden into Dublin. Of course it was chiefly to see him he had gone there.

"And Miss Walsingham?"

She was also out; no, not in the garden. John thought maybe at old Miss Chattlesworth's school; or, Sally said, maybe at Belmont; they did not know.

Devereux looked into the large room at the right hand of the hall, with the fair sad portrait of Liliass's young mother smiling from the wall. Like *her*, too—and the tall glasses of flowers—and the harpsichord open, with the



music she would play, just as usual, that evening, he supposed; and he stood at the door, looking round the room, booted and spurred, as I have said, with his cocked-hat held to his breast, in a reverie. It was not easy for old Sally to guess what was passing in his mind, for whenever he was sad he smiled, but with the *quicquid amari* in his smile, and when he suffered he used to joke.

Just at that moment Lilius Walsingham was walking along the high street of the village to the King's House, and stopping to say a good-natured little word to old Jenny Creswell, was overtaken by mild Mrs. Sturk, who was walking her little menagerie into the Park.

"And oh! dear Miss Walsingham, did you hear the news?" she said; "Captain Devereux is gone to England, and I believe we shan't see him here again."

Lilius felt that she grew pale, but she patted one of the children on the head, and smiled, and asked him some foolish little question.

"But why won't you listen, dear Miss Lilius? You don't hear, I think," said Mrs Sturk.

"I do hear, indeed; when did he go?" she asked, coldly enough

"About half an hour ago," Mrs Sturk thought: and so, with a word or two more, and a kissing of hands, the good lady turned, with her brood, up the Park lane, and Lily walked on to pay

her visit to Mrs. Colonel Strafford, feeling all the way a strange pang of anger and disappointment.

"To think of his going away without taking leave of my father!"

And when she reached the hall-door of the King's House, for a moment she forgot what she had come for, and was relieved to find that good Mrs. Strafford was in town.

There was then, I don't know whether there is not now, a little path leading by the river bank from Chapelizod to Island-bridge, just an angler's foot-path, devious and broken, but withal very sweet and pretty. Leaving the King's House, she took this way home, and as she walked down to the river bank, the mortified girl looked down upon the grass close by her feet, and whispered to the daisies as she went along—"No, there's no more kindness nor friendliness left in the world; the people are all cold creatures now, and hypocrites; and I'm glad he's gone."

She paused at the stile which went over the hedge just beside an old fluted pier, with a grass-grown urn at top, and overgrown with a climbing rose-tree, just such a study as a young lady might put in her album; and then she recollected the long letter from old Miss Wardle that Aunt Becky had sent her to read, with a request, which from that quarter was a command, that she should return it by six o'clock, for Aunt

Becky, even in matters indifferent, liked to name hours, and nail people sharp and hard to futile appointments and barren punctualities.

She paused at the stile; she liked the old pier; its partner next the river was in fragments, and the ruin and the survivor had both been clothed by good Mrs. Strafford—who drew a little, and cultivated the picturesque—with the roses I have mentioned, besides woodbine and ivy. She had old Miss Wardle's letter in her hand, full, of course, of shocking anecdotes about lunatics, and the sufferings of Fleet prisoners, and all the statistics, and inquiries, and dry little commissions, with which that worthy lady's correspondence abounded. It was open in her hand, and rustled sharp and stiffly in the air, but it was not inviting just then. From that point it was always a pretty look down or up the river; and her eyes followed with the flow of its waters towards Inchicore. She loved the river; and in her thoughts she wondered why she loved it—so cold, so unimpressible—that went shining and rejoicing away into the sea. And just at that moment she heard a sweet tenor, with a gaiety somehow pathetic, sing not far away the words she remembered—

“And she smiled upon the stream,  
Like one that smiles at folly,  
A dreamer on a dream.”

Devereux was coming—it was his playful salutation. Her large eyes dropped to the ground

with the matchless blush of youth. She was strangely glad, but vexed at having changed colour; but when he came up with her, in the deep shadow thrown by the old pier, with its thick festooneries, he could not tell, he only knew she looked beautiful.

"My dreams take wing, but my follies will not leave me. And you have been ill, Miss Liliass?"

"Oh, nothing; only a little cold."

"And I am going—I only knew last night—really going away." He paused; but the young lady did not feel called upon to say anything, and only allowed him to go on. In fact, she was piqued, and did not choose to show the least concern about his movements. "And I've a great mind, now that I'm departing this little world;" and he glanced, it seemed to her, regretfully towards the village; "to put you down, Miss Lily, if you will allow it, in my codicil for a legacy"—

She laughed a pleasant little careless laugh. How ill-natured! but, oh! wasn't it musical.

"Then, I suppose, if you were not to see me for some time, or maybe for ever, the village folks won't break their hearts after Dick Devereux."

And the Gipsy Captain smiled, and his eyes threw a soft violet shadow down upon her; and there was that in his tone which for a moment touched her with a strange reproach, like a bar of sweet music.

But little Lily was spirited; and if *he*, so early a friend, could go away without bidding good-bye, why he should not suppose *she* cared.

"Break our hearts?" Not all, perhaps; but of course I—the parson's daughter—I should, and old Moore, the barber, and Pat Moran, the hackney coachman, and Mrs. Irons, your fat landlady, you've been so very good to all of us, you know."

"Well," he interrupted, "I've left my white surtout to Moran; a hat, let me see, and a pair of buckles to Moore; and my glass and china to dear Mrs. Irons."

"Hat—buckles—surtout—glass—china—gone! Then it seems to me your earthly possessions are pretty nearly disposed of, and your worldly cares at an end."

"Yes; very nearly, but not quite," he laughed. "I have one treasure left—my poor monkey; he's a wonderful fellow—he has travelled half over the world, and is a perfect fine gentleman—and my true comrade until now. Do you think Dr. Walsingham, of his charity, would give the poor fellow free quarters at the Elms?"

She was going to make answer with a jest, satirically; but her mood changed quickly. It was, she thought, saucy of Captain Devereux to fancy that she should care to have his pet; and she answered a little gravely—

"I can't say, indeed; had you cared to see

him, you might have asked him; but indeed, Captain Devereux, I believe you're jesting,"

"Faith! madam, I believe I am; or, it does not much matter—dreaming perhaps. There's our bugle!" And the sweet sounds quivered and soared through the pleasant air. "How far away it sounds already; ours are sweet bugles—the sweetest bugles to my ear in the wide world. Yes, dreaming. I said I had but one treasure left," he continued, with a fierce sort of tenderness that was peculiar to him: "and I did not mean to tell you, but I will. Look at that Miss Lily, 'tis the little rose you left on your harpsichord this morning. I stole it: 'tis mine; and Richard Devereux would die rather than lose it to another."

So then, after all, he had been at the Elms; and she had wronged him.

"Yes, dreaming," he continued, in his old manner; "and 'tis time I were awake, awake, and on the march."

"You are, then, really going?" she said, so that no one would have guessed how strangely she felt at that moment.

"Yes, really going," he said, quite in his own way; "Over the hills and far away; and so, I know, you'll first wish your old friend, God speed."

"I do, indeed."

"And then you'll shake hands, Miss Lily, as in old times."

And out came the frank little hand, and he looked on it, with a darkling smile, as it lay in his own sinewy but slender grasp; and she said with a smile—"Good-bye."

She was frightened lest he should possibly say more than she knew how to answer.

"And somehow it seems to me, I have a great deal to say."

"And I've a great deal to read, you see;" and she just stirred old Miss Wardle's letter, that lay open in her hand, with a smile just the least in the world of comic distress.

"A great deal," he said.

"And farewell, again," said Lilius.

"Farewell! dear Miss Lily."

And then, he just looked his old strange look upon her, and he went; and she dropped her eyes upon the letter. He had got into the far meadow, where the path makes a little turn round the clump of poplars, and hides itself. Just there he looked over his shoulder, a last look it might be, the handsome strange creature that had made so many of her hours pass so pleasantly; he that was so saucy with every one else, and so gentle with her; of whom, she believed, she might make any thing, a hero or a demigod! She knew a look would call him back—back, maybe, to her feet; but she could not give that little sign. There she stood, affecting to read that letter, one word of which she did not see. "She does not care; but—but

there's no one like her. No—she does not care.” He thought; and she let him think it: but her heart swelled to her throat, and she felt as if she could have screamed, “Come back—my only love—my darling—without you I must die!” But she did not raise her head. She only read on, steadily, old Miss Wardle’s letter—over and over—the same half dozen lines. And when, after five minutes more, she lifted up her eyes, the hoary poplars were ruffling their thick leaves in the breeze—and he gone; and the plaintive music came mellowed from the village, and the village and the world, seemed all on a sudden empty for her.



## CHAPTER II.

IN WHICH AUNT BECKY AND DOCTOR TOOLE, IN FULL BLOW;  
WITH DOMINICK, THE FOOTMAN, BEHIND THEM, VISIT  
MISS LILY AT THE ELMS.

AFTER such leave-takings, especially where something like a revelation takes place, there sometimes supervenes, I'm told, a sort of excitement before the chill and ache of separation sets in. So, Lily, when she went home, found that her music failed her, all but the one strange little air, "The river ran between them;" and then she left the harpischord and went into the garden through the glass door, but the flowers had only half their interest, and the garden was solitary, and she felt restless, as if she were going to make a journey, or looking for strange news; and then she bethought her again of Mrs. Colonel Strafford, and that she might have, by this time, returned from Dublin, and there was some little interest about the good old lady, even in this, that she had just returned by the same road that he had gone away by; that she might have chanced to see him as he passed; that at least she might happen to speak of him, and to know something of the likelihood of his return, or even to speculate about

him; for now any talk in which his name occurred was interesting, though she did not know it quite herself. So she went down to the King's House, and did find old Mrs. Strafford at home: and after an entertaining gossip about some "rich Nassau damask," at Haughton's in the Coombe, that had taken her fancy mightily, and how she had chosen a set of new Nankeen plates and fine oblong dishes at the Music Hall, and how Peter Raby the watchman, was executed yesterday morning, in web worsted breeches, for the murder of Mr. Thomas Fleming, of Thomas-street, she did come at last to mention Devereux; and she said that the Colonel had had a letter from General Chatterworth, "who, by-the-bye," and then came a long parenthesis, very pleasant, you may be sure, for Lily to listen to, and the General thought it most likely that Devereux would not return to Chapelizod, and the Royal Irish Artillery; and then she went on to other subjects, and Lily staid a long time, thinking she might return to Devereux, but she did not mention him again. So home went little Lily more pensive than she came.

It was near eight o'clock, when who should arrive at the door, and flutter the crows in the old elms with an energetic double knock, but Aunt Rebecca, accompanied by no less a personage than Dr. Toole, in full costume, and attended by old Dominick the footman.

The Doctor was a little bit ruffled and testy, for having received a summons from Belmont, he had attended in full blow, expecting to prescribe for Aunt Rebecca or Miss Gertrude, and found, instead, that he was in for a barren and benevolent walk of half a mile on the Inchicore road, with the energetic Miss Rebecca, to visit one of her felonious pensioners who lay sick in his rascally crib. It was not the first time that the jolly little Doctor had been entrapped by the good lady into a purely philanthropic excursion of this kind. But he could not afford to mutiny, and vented his disgust in blisters and otherwise drastic treatment of the malingering scoundrels whom he served out after his kind for the trouble and indignity they cost him.

"And here we are, Lily dear, on our way to see poor dear Pat Doolin, who, I fear, is not very long for this world. Dominick!—he's got a brain fever, my dear."

The Doctor said "pish!" inaudibly, and Aunt Becky went on.

"You know the unhappy creature is only just out of prison, and if ever mortal suffered unjustly, he's the man. Poor Doolan's as innocent as you or I, my dear, or sweet little Spot, there;" pointing her fan like a pistol at that interesting quadruped's head. "The disgrace has broken his heart, and that's at the bottom of his sickness. I wish you could hear him speak, poor dear wretch—

Dominick!" and she had a word for that domestic in the hall.

"Hear him speak, indeed!" said Toole, taking advantage of her momentary absence. "I wish you could, the drunken blackgard. King Solomon could not make sense of it. She gave that burglar, would you believe it, ma'am? two guineas, by Jupiter! the first of this month—and whiskey only sixpence a pint—and he was drunk without intermission of course, day and night for a week after. Brain fever, indeed, 'tis just as sweet a little fit of delirium tremens, my dear madam, as ever sent an innocent burglar slap into bliss;" and the word popped out with a venomous hiss and an angry chuckle.

"And so, my dear," resumed Aunt Becky, marching in again; "good Doctor Toole—our good Samaritan, here—has taken him up, just for love, and the poor man's fee—his blessing."

The Doctor muttered something about "taking him up," but inarticulately, for it was only for the relief of his own feelings.

"And now, dear Liliias, we want your good father to come with us just to pray by the poor fellow's bedside; he's in the study, is he?"

"No, he was not to be home until to-morrow morning."

"Bless me!" cried Aunt Becky, with as much asperity as if she had said something different; "and not a soul to be had to comfort a dying

wretch in your father's parish—yes, he's dying; we want a minister to pray with him, and here we've a Flemish account of the rector. This tells prettily for Dr. Walsingham!"

"Dr. Walsingham's the best rector in the whole world, and the holiest man, and the noblest," cried brave little Lily, standing like a deer at bay, with her wild shy eyes looking full in Aunt Becky's, and a flush in her cheeks, and the beautiful light of truth beaming like a star from her forehead. And for a moment it looked like battle; but the old lady smiled a kind of droll little smile, and gave her a little pat on the cheek saying with a shake of her head, "saucy girl!"

"And you," said Lily, throwing her arms about her neck, "are my own Aunt Becky, the greatest darling in the world!" And so, as John Bunyan says, "the water stood in their eyes," and they both laughed, and then they kissed, and loved one another the better. That was the way their little quarrels used always to end.

"Well Doctor, we must only do what we can," said Aunt Becky, looking gravely on the physician; "and I don't see why *you* should not read—you can lend us a prayer-book, darling?—just a collect or two, and the Lord's Prayer—eh?"

"Why, my dear ma'am, the fellow's howling about King Lewis and the American Indians, Dominick says, and ghosts and constables, and devils, and worse things, madam, and—pooh—

punch and laudanum's his only chance; don't mind the prayer-book, Miss Lily—there's no use in it, Mistress Chatterworth; I give you my honour, ma'am, he could not make head or tail of it."

In fact, the Doctor was terrified lest Aunt Rebecca should compel him to officiate, and he was thinking how the fellows at the club, and the Aldermen of Skinner's-alley, would get hold of the story, and treat the subject less gravely than was desirable.

So Aunt Becky, with Lily's leave, called in Dominick to examine him touching the soundness of Pat Doolan's mind, and the honest footman had no hesitation in pronouncing him wholly *non compos*.

"Pleasant praying with a chap like that, by Jove, as drunk as an owl, and as mad as a March hare! my dear ma'am," whispered Toole to Lillias.

"And, Lily dear, there's poor Gertrude all alone—'twould be good natured in you to go up and drink a dish of tea with her; but, then, your cold—maybe you're afraid?"

She was not afraid—she had been out to-day—and it had done her all the good in the world, and it was very good of Aunt Becky to think of it, for she was lonely too: and so off went the elder Miss Chatterworth, with her Doctor and Dominick, in their various moods, on their mission of mercy; and Lily sent into the town for the two chairmen, Peter Bryan and Larry Foy, the two-legged ponies, as Toole called them.

## CHAPTER III.

NARRATING HOW MISS LILIAS VISITED BELMONT, AND  
SAW A STRANGE COCKED-HAT IN THE SHADOW BY THE  
WINDOW

AT that time, in every hall of gentility, there stood a sedan-chair, the property of the lady of the house; and by the time the chairmen had arrived and got the poles into their places, and trusty John Tracy had got himself into his brown surtout, trimmed with white lace, and his cane in his hand—(there was no need of a lantern, for the moon shone softly and pleasantly down)—Miss Lillas Walsingham drew her red riding hood about her pretty face, and stepped into the chair; and so the door shut, the roof closed in, and the young lady was fairly under weigh. She had so much to think of, so much to tell about her day's adventure, that before she thought she had come half the way, they were flitting under the shadows of the poplars that grew beside the avenue; and, through the window, she saw the hospitable house spreading out its white front as they drew near, and opening its wings to embrace her.

The hall-door stood half open, though it had been dark some time; and the dogs came down

with a low growl, and plenty of sniffing, which forthwith turned into a solemn wagging of tails, for they were intimate with the chairmen, and with John Tracy, and loved Lilies too. So she got out in the hall, and went into the little room at the right, and opening the door of the inner and larger one—there was no candle there, and 'twas nearly dark—saw Gertrude standing by the window which looked out on the lawn toward the river. That side of the house was in shade, but she saw that the window was thrown up, and Gertrude, she thought, was looking toward her, though she did not move, until she drew nearer, wondering why she did not approach, and then, pausing in a kind of unpleasant doubt, she heard a murmured talking, and plainly saw the figure of a man, with a cloak, it seemed, wrapped about him, and leaning, from outside, against the window-sill, and, as she believed, holding Gertrude's hand.

The thing that impressed her most was the sharp outline of the cocked-hat, with the corners so peculiarly pinched in, and the feeling that she had never seen that particular hat before in the parish of Chapelizod.

Lily made a step backward, and Gertrude instantly turned round, and seeing her, uttered a little scream.

"'Tis I, Gertrude, darling—Lily—Lily Walsingham," she said, perhaps as much dismayed as Gertrude herself; "I'll return in a moment."



She saw the figure, outside, glide hurriedly away by the side of the wall.

"Lily—Lily, darling, no, don't go—I did not expect you;" and Gertrude stopped suddenly, and then as suddenly said—

"You are very welcome, Lily;" and she drew the window down, and there was another pause before she said—"Had not we better go up to the drawing-room, and—and—Lily darling, you're very welcome. Are you better?"

And she took little Lily's hand, and kissed her.

Little Lilius all this time had said nothing, so entirely was she disconcerted. And her heart beat fast with a kind of fear; and she felt Gertrude's cold hand tremble a good deal in her's.

"Yes, darling, the drawing-room, certainly," answered Lily. And the two young ladies went upstairs holding hands, and without exchanging another word.

"Aunt Becky has gone some distance to see a sick pensioner; I don't expect her return before an hour."

"Yes—I know—and she came, dear Gertrude, to see me; and I should not have come, but that she asked—me and"—

She stopped, for she was speaking apologetically, like an intruder, and she was shocked to feel what a chasm on a sudden separated them, and oppressed with the consciousness that their old

mutual girlish confidence was dead and gone; and the incident of the evening, and Gertrude's changed aspect, and their changed relations, seemed a dreadful dream.

Gertrude looked so pale and wretchedly, and Lily saw her eyes, wild and clouded, once or twice steal toward her with a glance of such dark alarm and inquiry, that she was totally unable to keep up the semblance of their old merry gossiping talk, and felt that Gertrude read in her face the amazement and fear which possessed her.

"Lily, darling, let us sit near the window, far away from the candles, and look out; I hate the light.

"With all my heart," said Lily. And two paler faces than theirs, that night, did not look out on the moonlight prospect.

"I hate the light, Lily," repeated Gertrude, not looking at her companion, but directly out through the bow-window upon the dark outline of the lawn and river bank and the high grounds on the other side. "I hate the light—yes, I hate the light, because my thoughts are darkness—yes, my thoughts are darkness. No human being knows me; and I feel like a person who is *haunted*. Tell me what you saw when you came into the parlour just now."

"Gertrude, dear, I ought not to have come in so suddenly."

"Yes, 'twas but right—'twas but kind in you,

Lily—right and kind—to treat me like the open-hearted and intimate friend that, heaven knows, I was to you, Lily, all my life. I think—at least, I think—till lately—but you were always franker than I—and truer. You’ve walked in the light, Lily, and that’s the way to peace. I turned aside, and walked in mystery; and it seems to me I am treading now the valley of the shadow of death. Waking and talking, I am, nevertheless, in the solitude and darkness of the grave. And what did you see, Lily—I know you’ll tell me truly—when you came into the parlour, as I stood by the window?”

“I saw, I think, the form of a man in a cloak and hat, as I believe, talking with you in whispers, Gertrude, from without.”

“The form of a man, Lily—you’re right—not a man, but the form of a man,” she continued, bitterly; “for it seems to me sometimes it can be no human fascination that has brought me under the tyranny in which I can scarce be said to breathe.”

After an interval she said—

“It will seem incredible. You’ve heard of Mr. Dangerfield’s proposal, and you’ve heard how I’ve received it. Well, listen.”

“Gertrude, dear!” said Lily, who was growing frightened.

“I’m going,” interrupted Miss Chatterworth, “to tell you my strange, if you will, but not

guilty—no, *not* guilty—secret. I'm no agent now, but simply passive in the matter. But you must first pledge me your sacred word that neither to my father nor to your's, nor to my aunt, nor to any living being, will you ever reveal what I'm about to tell you, till I have released you from your promise."

Did ever woman refuse a secret? Well, Lily wavered for a moment. But then suddenly stooping down, and kissing her, she said——

"No, Gertrude, darling—you'll not be vexed with me—but you must not tell me your secret. You have excuses such as I should not have—you've been drawn into this concealment, step by step, unwillingly; but, Gertrude, darling, I must not hear it, I could not look Aunt Becky in the face, nor the kind General, knowing that I was"——

She tried to find a word.

"*Deceiving* them, Lily," said Gertrude, with a moan.

"Yes, Gertrude, darling." And she kissed her again. "And maybe to your great hurt. But I thank you all the same from my heart for your confidence and love; and I'm gladder than you'll ever know, Gerty, that they are still the same." And thus the two girls kissed silently and fervently, and poor Gertrude Chatterworth wept uncomplainingly, looking out upon the dark prospect.

"And you'll tell me, darling, when you're happier, as you soon will be?" said Lily.

"I will—I will indeed. I'm sometimes happier—sometimes quite happy—but I'm very low to-night, Lily," answered she.

Then Lily comforted and caressed her friend. And I must confess she was very curious, too, and nothing but a strange sense of terror, and a feeling of danger and guilt in merely possessing a secret under such terms, withheld her from hearing Gertrude's confession. But on her way home she thanked Heaven for her resolution, and was quite sure that she was happier and better for it.

They were roused by Aunt Becky's knock at the hall-door, and her voice and Dominick's under the window.

## CHAPTER IV.

SHOWING HOW SOME OF THE FEUDS IN CHAPELIZOD  
WAXED FIERCER, AND OTHERS WERE SOLEMNLY CON-  
DONED.


By this time little Dr. Toole had stepped into the Club, after his wont, as he passed the Phoenix. Sturk was playing draughts with old Arthur Slowe, and Dangerfield, erect and grim, was looking on the game, over his shoulder. Toole and Sturk were more distant and cold in their intercourse of late, though this formality partook of their respective characters. Toole used to throw up his nose, and raise his eyebrows, and made his brother mediciner a particularly stiff, and withal scornful reverence when they met. Sturk, on the other hand, made a short, surly nod—'twas little more—and, without a word, turned on his heel, with a gruff pitch of his shoulder towards Toole.

The fact was, these two gentlemen had been very near exchanging pistol shots, or sword thrusts, only a week or two before; and all about the unconscious gentleman who was smiling in his usual pleasant fashion over the back of Sturk's chair. So Dangerfield's little dyspepsy had like

to have cured one or other of the village leeches, for ever and a day, of the heart-ache and all other aches that flesh is heir to. For Dangerfield commenced with Toole; and that physician, on the third day of his instalment, found that Sturk had stept in and taken his patient bodily out of his hands.

“I’ve seen one monkey force open the jaws of his brother, resolutely introduce his fingers, pluck from the sanctuary of his cheek, the tit-bit he had just stowed there for his private nutrition and delight, and crunch and eat it with a stern ecstasy of selfishness, himself; and I fancy that the feelings of the quadrumanous victim of this manoeuvre, his jaws aching, his pouch outraged, and his bon-bouche in the miscreant’s mouth, a little resembles those of the physician who has suffered so hideous a mortification as that of Toole.

Toole quite forgave Dangerfield. That gentleman gave him to understand that *his* ministrations were much more to his mind than those of his rival. But—and this was conveyed in strict confidence—this change was put upon him by a—a—in fact a nobleman—Lord Castlemallard—with whom, just now, Dr. Sturk can do a great deal; “and you know I can’t quarrel with my Lord. It has pained me, I assure you, very much; and to say truth, whoever applied to him to interfere in the matter, was, in my mind, guilty of an impertinence, though, as you see, I can’t resent it.”



"*Whoever* applied? 'tis pretty plain," repeated Toole, with a vicious sneer. "The whispering, undermining—and as stupid as the Hill of Howth. I wish you safe out of his hands, sir."

And positively, only for Aunt Becky, who was always spoiling this sort of sport, and who restrained the gallant Toole by a peremptory injunction, there would have been, in Nutter's unfortunate phrase, "wigs on the green," next day.

So these gentlemen met on the terms I've described; and Nutter's antipathy also, had waxed stronger and fiercer. And indeed, since Dangerfield's arrival, and Sturk's undisguised endeavours to ingratiate himself with Lord Castlemallard, and push him from his stool, they had by consent ceased to speak to one another. When Sturk met Nutter, he, being of superior stature, looked over his head at distant objects; and when Nutter encountered Sturk, the little gentleman's dark face grew instantaneously darker—first a shade—then another shadow—then the blackness of thunder overspread it; and not only did he speak not a word to Sturk, but seldom opened his lips while that gentleman remained in the room.

On the other hand, if some feuds grew blacker and fiercer by time, there were others which were Christianly condoned; foremost among which was the mortal quarrel between Nutter and O'Flaherty. On the evening of their memorable meeting on the Fifteen Acres, Puddock dined out, and



O'Flaherty was too much exhausted to take any steps toward a better understanding. But on the night following, when the Club had their grand supper in King William's parlour, it was arranged with Nutter that a gentlemanlike reconciliation was to take place; and accordingly, about nine o'clock, at which time Nutter's arrival was expected, Puddock, with the pomp and gravity becoming such an occasion, accompanied by O'Flaherty, big with his speech, entered the spacious parlour.

When they came in there was a chorus of laughter ringing round, with a clapping of hands, and a Babel of hilarious applause; and Tom Toole was seen in the centre, sitting upon the floor, hugging his knees, with his drawn sword under his arm, his eyes turned up to the ceiling, and a contortion so unspeakably ludicrous upon his queer little face, as was very near causing little Puddock to explode in an unseemly burst of laughter.

Devereux, sitting near the door, luckily saw them as they entered, and announced them in a loud tone—"Lieutenant Puddock, gentlemen, and Lieutenant Fireworker O'Flaherty." For though Gipsy Devereux loved a bit of mischief, he did not relish it, when quite so serious, as the Galwegian Fireworker was likely to make any sort of trifling on a point so tender as his recent hostilities on the Fifteen Acres.

Toole bounded to his feet in an instant, adjust-

ing his wig, and eyeing the new comers with intense but uneasy solemnity, which produced some suppressed merriment among the company.

It was well for the serenity of the village that O'Flaherty was about to make a little speech—a situation which usually deprived him of half his wits. Still, with the suspicion of conscious weakness, he read something affecting himself in the general buzz and countenance of the assembly; and said to Devereux, on purpose loud enough for Toole to hear—"Ensign Puddock and myself would be proud to know what was the divarting tom-foolery going on upon the floor, and for which we arrived unfortunately a little too leet?"

"Tom-foolery, sir, is an unpleasant word!" cried the little Doctor, firing up, for he was a game-cock.

"Tom Toolery he means," interposed Devereux, "the pleasantest word, on the contrary, in Chapel-ized. Pray, allow me to say a word a degree more serious. I'm commissioned, Lieutenant Puddock and Lieutenant O'Flaherty" (a bow to each), "by Mr. Mahony, who acted the part of second to Mr. Nutter, on the recent occasion, to pray that you'll be so obliging as to accept his apology for not being present at this, as we all hope, most agreeable meeting. Our reverend friend, Father Roach, whose guest he had the honour to be, can tell you more precisely the urgent nature of the business on which he departed."

Father Roach tried to stop the Captain with a reproachful glance, but that unfeeling officer fairly concluded his sentence notwithstanding, with a wave of his hand and a bow to the cleric; and sitting down at the same moment, left him in possession of the chair.

The fact was, that at an unseasonable hour that morning three bailiffs—for the excursion was considered hazardous—introduced themselves by a stratagem into the Reverend Father's domicile, and nabbed the high-souled Patrick Mahony, as he slumbered peacefully in his bed, to the terror of the simple maid who let them in. Honest Father Roach was for showing fight on behalf of his guest. On hearing the row and suspecting its cause—for Pat had fled from the kingdom of Kerry from perils of the same sort—his Reverence jumped out of bed with a great pound on the floor, and not knowing where to look for his clothes in the dark, he seized his surplice, which always lay in the press at the head of his bed, and got into it with miraculous speed, whisking along the floor two pounds and a half of Mr. Fogarty's best bacon, which the holy man had concealed in the folds of that sacred vestment, to elude the predatory instincts of the women, and from which he and Mr. Mahony were wont to cut their jovial rashers.

The shutter of poor Mahony's window was by this time open, and the gray light disclosed the

grimly form of Father Roach, in his surplice, floating threateningly into the chamber. But the bailiffs were picked men, broad-shouldered and athletic, and furnished with active-looking shille-lags. *Veni, vidi, victus sum!* a glance showed him all was lost.

"My blessin' an you, Peg Finigan! and was it you let them in?" murmured his Reverence, with intense feeling.

"At whose suit?" inquired the generous outlaw, sitting up among the blankets.

"Mrs. Elizabeth Woolly, relict and administhrathrix of the late Mr. Timotheus Woolly, of High-street, in the city of Dublin, tailor," responded the choragus of the officers.

"Woolly—I was thinkin' so," said the captive. "I wisht I *had* her by the wool, bad luck to her!"

So away he went, to the good-natured ecclesiastic's grief, promising, nevertheless, with a disconsolate affectation of cheerfulness, that all should be settled, and he under the Priest's roof-tree again before night.

"I don't—exactly—know the nature of the business, gentlemen," said Father Roach, with considerable hesitation.

"*Urgent*, however, it *was*—wasn't it?" said Devereux.

"Urgent—well; *certainly*—a—and"—

"And a summons there was no resisting—from

a lady—eh? You said so, Father Roach,” persisted Devereux.

“A—from a leedy—a—yes—certainly,” replied he.

“A *widow*—is not she?” inquired Devereux.

“A widda, undoubtedly,” said the Priest.

“Thay no more thir,” said little Puddock, to the infinite relief of the reverend father, who flung another look of reproach at Devereux, and muttered his indignation to himself. “I’m perfectly satisfied; and so I venture to thay, its Lieutenant O’Faherty”—

“Is not he going to say something to Nutter?” inquired Devereux.

“Yeth,” whispered Puddock, “I hope he’ll get through it. I—I wrote a few thententhes my-thelf; but he’th by no meanth perfect—in fact, between ourselves, he’s a somewhat slow study.”

“Suppose you purge his head again, Puddock?” Puddock did not choose to hear the suggestion; but Nutter, in reply to a complimentary speech from Puddock, declared, in two or three words, his readiness to meet Lieutenant O’Flaherty half-way; “and curse me, sir, if I know, at this moment, what I did or said to offend him.”

Then came a magnanimous, but nearly unintelligible speech from O’Flaherty, prompted by little Puddock, who, being responsible for the composition, was more nervous during the delivery of that remarkable oration, than the speaker himself;

and "thuffered indethcribably" at hearing his periods mangled; and had actually to hold O'Flaherty by the arm, and whisper in an agony—"not yet—*curthe* it—not yet"—to prevent the incorrigible Fireworker from stretching forth his boney red hand before he had arrived at that most effective passage which Puddock afterwards gave so well in private for Dick Devereux, beginning, "and thus I greet"—

Thus was there a perfect reconciliation, and the gentlemen of the club, Toole included, were more than ever puzzled to understand the origin of the quarrel, for Puddock kept O'Flaherty's secret magnificently, and peace prevailed in O'Flaherty's breast until nearly ten months afterwards, when Cluffe, who was talking of the American war, asked O'Flaherty, who was full of volunteering, how he would like a "clean shave with an Indian scalping knife," whereupon O'Flaherty stood erect, and having glowered upon him for a moment, strode in silence from the room, and consulted immediately with Puddock on the subject, who, after a moment's reflection, found it no more than chance meddley.

## CHAPTER V.

## DREAMS AND TROUBLES, AND A DARK LOOK-OUT.

So there was no feud in the club worth speaking of but those of which Dr. Sturk was the centre; and Toole remarked this night that Sturk looked very ill—and so, in truth, he did; and it was plain, too, that his mind was not in the game, for old Slowe, who used not to have a chance with him, beat him three times running, which incensed Sturk, as small things will a man who is in the slow fever of a secret trouble. He threw down the three shillings he had lost with more force than was necessary, and muttering a curse, clapped on his hat and took up a newspaper at another table, with a rather flushed face. He happened to light upon a dolorous appeal to those “whom Providence hath blessed with riches,” on behalf of a gentleman “who had once held a commission under his Majesty, and was now on a sudden by some unexpected turns of fortune, reduced, with his unhappy wife and five small children, to want of bread, and implored of his prosperous fellow-citizens that charitable relief which, till a few months since, it was his custom and pleasure to dispense to others.” And this

stung him with a secret pang of insecurity and horror. Trifles affected him a good deal now. So he pitched down the newspaper and walked across to his own house, with his hands in his pockets, and thought again of Dangerfield, and who the deuce he could be, or whether he had really ever, anywhere—in the body or in the spirit—encountered him, as he used to feel with a boding vagueness he had done. And then those accursed dreams: he was not relieved as he expected by disclosing them. The sense of an ominous meaning pointing at him in all their grotesque images and scenery, still haunted him.

“Parson Walsingham, with all his reading,” his mind muttered, as it were, to itself, “is no better than an old woman; and that knave and buffoon, Mr. Apothecary Toole, looked queer, the spiteful dog, just to disquiet me. I wonder at Dr. Walsingham, though. A sensible man would have laughed me into spirits. On my soul, I think he believes in dreams.” And Sturk laughed within himself scornfully. It was all affectation, and addressed strictly to himself, who saw through it all; but still he practised it. “If these infernal losses had not come to spoil my stomach, I should not have remembered them, much less let them haunt me this way, like a cursed file of ghosts. I’ll try gentian to-morrow.”

Everything and everyone was poking at the one point of his secret fears. Dr. Walsingham



preached a sermon upon the text, "remember the days of darkness for they are many." It went over the tremendous themes of death and judgment in the rector's own queer, solemn, measured way, and all the day after rang in Sturk's ear as the drums and fifes in the muffled peal of the dead march used to do long ago, before his ear grew familiar with its thrilling roll. Sermons usually affected Sturk no more than they did other military gentlemen. But he was in a morbid state; and in this, one or two terms or phrases, nothing in themselves, happened to touch upon a sensitive and secret centre of pain in the Doctor's soul.

For instance, when he called death "the great bankruptcy," which would make the worldly man, in a moment, the only person in his house not worth a shilling, the preacher glanced unconsciously at a secret fear in the caverns of Sturk's mind, that echoed back the sonorous tones and grisly theme of the Rector with a hollow thunder.

There was a time when Sturk, like other shrewd, bustling fellows, had no objection to hear who had an execution in his house, who was bankrupt, and who laid by the heels; but now he shrunk from such phrases. He hated to think that a clever fellow was ever absolutely beggared in the world's great game. He turned his eye quickly from the *Gazette*, as it lay with other papers on the Club table; for its grim pages seemed to look in his face with a sort of significance, as if they might

some day or other have a small official duty to perform by him; and when an unexpected bankruptcy was announced by Cluffe or Toole in the Club-room, it made his ear ring like a slap, and he felt sickish for half an hour after.

One of that ugly brood of dreams which haunted his nights borrowed, perhaps, a hint from Dr. Walsingham's sermon. Sturk thought he heard Toole's well-known, brisk voice, under his windows, exclaim, "What is the dirty beggar doing there? faugh!—he smells all over like carrion—ha, ha, ha!" and looking out, in his dream, from his drawing-room window, he saw a squalid mendicant begging alms at his hall-door. "Hollo, you, sir; what do you want there?" cried the Surgeon, with a sort of unaccountable antipathy and fear. "He lost his last shilling in the great bankruptcy, in October," answered Dunstan's voice behind his ear; and in the earth-coloured face which the beggar turned up towards him, Sturk recognised his own features—"Tis I"—he gasped out, with an oath, and awoke in a horror, not knowing where he was. "I—I'm dying."

"October," thought Sturk—"bankruptcy. 'Tis just because I'm always thinking of that infernal bill, and old Dyle's renewal, and the rent."

Indeed, the Surgeon had a stormy look forward, and the navigation of October was so threatening, awful, and almost desperate, as he stood alone through the dreadful watches at the helm, with

hot cheek and unsteady hand, trusting stoically to luck, and hoping against hope, that rocks would melt, and the sea cease from drowning, that it was almost a wonder he did not leap overboard, only for the certainty of a cold head and a quiet heart, and one deep sleep.

And, then, he used to tot up his liabilities for that accursed month, near whose yawning verge he already stood; and then think of every penny coming to him, and what might be rescued and wrung from runaways and bankrupts whose bills he held, and whom he used to curse in his bed, with his fists and his teeth clenched, when poor little Mrs. Sturk, knowing nought of this danger, and having said her prayers, lay sound asleep by his side. Then he used to think, if he could only get the agency in time it would set him up—he could borrow £200 the day after his appointment; and he must make a push, and extend his practice. It was ridiculous, that blackguard little Toole carrying off the best families in the neighbourhood, and standing in the way of a man like him; and Nutter, too—why, Lord Castlemallard knew as well as he did, that Nutter was not fit to manage the property, and that *he was*—and Nutter without a child or any one, and *he* with seven! and he counted them over mentally, with a groan. “What was to become of them?” Then Nutter would be down upon him, without mercy for the rent; and Dangerfield, if, indeed, he cared to do

it, [curse it, he trusted nobody,] could not control him; and Lord Castlemallard, the selfish profligate, was away in Paris, leaving his business in the hands of that bitter old botch, who'd go any length to be the ruin of him.

Then he turned over the chances of borrowing a hundred pounds from the General—as he did fifty times every day and night, but always with the same result—“No; curse him, he's as weak as water—petticoat government—he'll do nothing without his sister's leave, and she hates me like poison;” and then he thought—“it would not be much to ask Lord Castlemallard—there's still time—to give me a month or two for the rent, but if the old sneak thought I owed two-pence, I might whistle for the agency, and besides, faith!—I don't think he'd interfere.”

Then the clock down stairs would strike “three,” and he felt thankful, with a great sigh, that so much of the night was over, and yet dreaded the morning.

And then he would con over his chances again, and think which was most likely to give him a month or two. Old Dyle—“Bah;—he's a stone, he would not give me an hour. Or Carny, curse him, unless Lucas would move him. And, no, Lucas is a rogue, selfish beast: he owes me his place; and I don't think he'd stir his finger to snatch me from perdition. Or Nutter—Nutter, indeed!—why that fiend has been waiting half

the year round to put in his distress the first hour he can."

And then Sturk writhed round on his back, as we may suppose might St. Anthony on his grid-iron, and rolled his eye-balls up toward the dark bed-tester, and uttered a dismal groan, and thought of the three inexorable fates, Carny, Nutter, and Dyle, who at that moment held among them the measure, and the thread, and the shears of his destiny: and standing desperately in the dark at the verge of the abyss, he mentally hurled the three ugly spirits together into his bag, and flung them whirling through the murk into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone.

## CHAPTER VI.

TELLING HOW LILIAS WALSINGHAM FOUND TWO LADIES  
AWAITING HER ARRIVAL AT THE ELMS.

WHEN Lillas Walsingham, being set down in the hall at the Elms, got out and threw back her hood, she saw two females sitting there, who rose, as she emerged, and bobbed a courtesy each. The elder was a slight thin woman of fifty or upwards, dark of feature, but with large eyes, the relics of early beauty. The other, a youthful figure, an inch or two taller, slim and round, and showing only a pair of eyes, large and dark as the others, looking from under her red hood, earnestly and sadly as it seemed, upon Miss Walsingham.

"Good evening, good neighbours," said Miss Lily in her friendly way; the master is in town, and won't return till to-morrow; but may be you wish to speak to me?"

"'Tis no place for the like of yous," said old John Tracy, gruffly, for he knew them, with the privilege of an old servant. "If you want to see his Raverence, you must come in the morning."

"But it may be something, John, that can't wait, and that I can do," said Lily.

"And, true for you, so it is, my lady," said the

elder woman, with another bob; "an' I won't delay you, ma'am, five minutes, if you plaze, an' its the likes of you," she said, in a shrewish aside, with a flash of her large eyes upon John Tracy, "that stands betune them that's willin' to be good and the poor—so yes do, saucepans and bone-polishers, bad luck to yes."

The younger woman placked the elder by the skirt; but Lily did not hear. She was already in the parlour.

"Ay, there it is," grinned old John, with a wag of his head.

And so old Sally came forth and asked the women to step in, and set chairs for them, while Lily was taking off her gloves and hood by the table.

"You'll tell me first who you are," said Lily, "my good woman—for I don't think we've met before—and then you'll say what I can do for you."

"I'm the Widdy Glynn, ma'am, at your sarvice, that lives beyant Palmerstown, down by the ferry, af its playsin' to you; and this is my little girl, ma'am, av you plaze. Nan, look at the lady, you slut."

She did not need the exhortation, for she was, indeed, looking at the lady, with a curious and most melancholy gaze.

"An' what I'm goin' to say, my lady, if you plaze, id best be said alone;" and the matron glanced at old Sally, and bobbed another courtesy.

"Very well," said Miss Washingham. "Sally, dear, the good woman wants to speak with me alone; so you may as well go and wait for me in my room."

And so the young lady stood alone in presence of her two visitors, whereupon, with a good many courtesies, and with great volubility, the elder dame commenced—

"'Tis what we heerd, ma'am, that Captain Devereux, of the Artillery here, in Chapelizod, ma'am, that's gone to England, was coortin' you my lady; and I came here with this little girl, ma'am, if you plaze, to tell you, if so be it's thrue, ma'am, that there isn't this minute, a bigger villian out iv gaol—who brought my poor little girl there to disgrace and ruin, ma'am?"

Here Nan Glynn began to sob into her apron.

"'Twas you, Richard Devereux, that promised her marriage—with his hand on the Bible, on his bended knée. 'Twas you, Richard Devereux, you hardened villian—yes, ma'am, that parjured scoundrel—(don't be cryin', you fool)—put that ring there, you see, on her finger, Miss, an' a priest in the room, an' if ever man was woman's husband in the sight of God, Richard Devereux is married to Nan Glynn, poor an' simple as she stands there."

"Stop, mother," sobbed Nan, drawing her back by the arm; "don't you see the lady's sick."

"No—no—not anything; only—only shocked,"



said poor Lillas, as white as marble, and speaking almost in a whisper; "but I can't say Captain Devereux ever spoke to me in the way you suppose, that's all. I've no more to say."

Nan Glynn, sobbing and with her apron still to her eyes, was gliding to the door, but her mother looked, with a coarse sort of cunning in her eye, steadily at the poor young lady, in some sort her victim, and added more sternly—

"Well, my lady, 'tis proud I am to hear it, an' there's no harm done at any rate; an' I thought 'twas only right I should tell you the thruth, and give you this warnin', my lady; an' here's the atturney's writin', ma'am—if you'll plaze to read it—Mr. Bagshot, iv Thomas-street—sayin'—if you'll be plazed to look at it—that 'tis a good marriage, an' that if he marries any other woman, gentle or simple, he'll take the law iv him in my daughter's cause, the black, parjured villian, an' transport him, with a burnt hand, for bigamany; an' 'twas only right, my lady, as the townspeople was talking, as if it was as how he was thryin' to invagle you, Miss, the desaver, for he'd charum the birds off the trees, the parjurer; and I'll tell his Raverence all about it when I see him, in the morning—for 'tis only right he should know. Wish the lady good-night, Nan, you slut—an' the same from myself, ma'am."

And, with another courtesy, the Glynnns of Palmerstown withdrew.

## CHAPTER VII.

OF A MESSENGER FROM CHAPELIZOD VAULT WHO WAITED  
IN THE TYLED HOUSE FOR MR. MERVYN.

MERVYN was just about this time walking up the steep Ballyfermot road. It was then a lonely track, with great bushes and hedge-rows overhanging it; and as other emotions subsided, something of the chill and excitement of solitude stole over him. The moon was wading through flecked masses of cloud. The breath of night rustled lightly through the bushes, and seemed to follow his steps with a strange sort of sigh and a titter. He stopt and looked back under the branches of an old thorn, and traced against the dark horizon the still darker outline of the ivied church tower of Chapelizod, and thought of the dead that lay there, and of all that those sealed lips might tell, and old tales of strange meetings on moors and desolate places with departed spirits, flitted across his brain; and the melancholy rush of the night air swept close about his ears, and he turned and walked more briskly toward his own gloomy quarters, passing the church-yard of Ballyfermot on his right. There were plenty of head-stones among the docks and nettles: some short and some

tall, some straight and some slanting back, and some with a shoulder up, and a lonely old ash-tree still and dewy in the midst, glimmering cold among the moveless shadows; and then at last he sighted the heavy masses of old elm, and the pale, peeping front of the "Tyled House," through the close and dismal avenue of elm, he reached the front of the mansion. There was no glimmer of light from the lower windows, not even the noiseless flitting of a bat over the dark little court-yard. His key let him in. He knew that his servants were in bed. There was something cynical in his ree-raw independence. It was unlike what he had been used to, and its savagery suited with his bitter and unsociable mood of late.

But his hollow step sounding through the hall, and the stories about the place of which he was conscious, thrilled him, and he paused. He battled with these sensations, however, and though he knew there was a candle burning in his bed-room, he turned aside at the foot of the great stair, and stumbled and groped his way into the old wainscoted back-parlour, that looked out, through its great bow window, upon the haunted orchard, and sat down in its dismal solitude.

He ruminated upon his own hard fate—the meanness of mankind—the burning wrongs, as he felt confident, of other times, Fortune's inexorable persecution of his family, and the stygian

gulf that deepened between him and the object of his love; and his soul darkened with a fierce despair, and with unshaped but evil thoughts that invited the tempter.

The darkness of the place was unwholesome, its associations just then horrible, and he would have left it in a minute more, for the companionship of his candle, but that, on a sudden, he thought he heard a sound nearer than the breeze that sighed among the old orchard trees, and swept against the window.

This was the measured breathing of some one in the room. He held his own breath while he listened—"One of the dogs," he thought, and he called them quietly; but no dog came. "The wind, then, in the chimney;" and he got up resolutely, only half satisfied with his own solution, designing to open the half-closed shutter. He fancied as he did so that he heard the respiration near him, and passed close to some one in the dark.

With an unpleasant expectation he threw back the shutters, and unquestionably he did see, very unmistakably, a dark figure in a chair; so dark, indeed, that he could not discern more of it than the rude but undoubted outline of a human shape; and he stood for some seconds, holding the open shutter in his hand, and looking at it with more of the reality of fear than he had, perhaps, ever experienced before. Pale Hecate now, in the conspiracy, as it seemed, withdrew on a

sudden the pall from before her face, and threw her beams full upon the unmoved figure. A slim, tall shape, in dark clothing, and, as it seemed, a countenance he had never beheld before—black hair, pale features, with a sinister-smiling character, and a very blue chin, and closed eyes.

Fixed and freezing with a strange horror, and expecting to see it undergo some frightful metamorphosis, Mervyn stood gazing on the cadaverous intruder.

“Hallo! who’s that?” cried Mervyn, sternly.

The figure opened his eyes, with a wild stare, as if he had not opened them for a hundred years before, and rose up with an uncertain motion, returning Mervyn’s gaze, as if he did not know where he was.

“Who are you?” repeated Mervyn.

The phantom seemed to recover himself slowly, and only said: “Mr. Mervyn?”

“Who are you, sir?” cried Mervyn, again.

“Zekiel Irons.” He answered.

“Irons! what *are* you, and what business have you here, sir?” demanded Mervyn.

“The Clerk of Chapelizod,” he continued, quietly and remarkably sternly, but a little thickly, like a man who had been drinking. Mervyn now grew angry.

“The Clerk of Chapelizod—here—sleeping in my parlour! What the devil, sir, do you mean?”

“Sleep—sir—sleep! There’s them that sleeps

with their eyes open, sir—you know who they may be; there's some sleeps sound enough, like me and you; and some that's sleep-walkers," answered Irons; and his enigmatical talk somehow subdued Mervyn, for he said more quietly—

"Well, what of all this, sirrah?"

"A message," answered Irons. The man's manner, though quiet, was dogged, and somewhat savage.

"Give it me, then," said Mervyn, expecting a note, and extending his hand.

"I've nothing for your hand, sir, 'tis for your ear," said he.

"From whom, then, and what?" said Mervyn, growing impatient again.

"I ask your pardon, Mr. Mervyn, I have a good deal to do, back and forward, sometimes early, sometimes late, in the church—Chapelized Church—all alone, sir; and I often think of you, when I walk over the south-side vault."

"What's your message, I say, sir, and who sends it," insisted Mervyn.

"Your father," answered Irons.

Mervyn looked with a black and wild sort of inquiry on the clerk, and seemed to swallow down a sort of horror, before his anger rose again.

"You're mistaken—my father's dead," he said, in a fierce but agitated undertone.

"He's dead, sir—yes," said his saturnine visiter, with the same faint smile and cynical quietude.\*

"Speak out, sirrah; whom do you come from?"

"The late Right Honourable the Lord Viscount Dunoran." He spoke, as I have said, a little thickly, like a man who had drunk his modicum of liquor.

"You've been drinking, and you dare to mix my—my father's name with your drunken dreams and babble—you wretched sot!"

A cloud passed over the moon just then, and Irons darkened, as if about to vanish, like an offended apparition. But it was only for a minute, and he emerged in the returning light, and spoke—

"A naggin of whiskey, at the Salmon House, to rise my heart before I came here. I'm not drunk—that't sure." He answered, quite unmoved, like one speaking to himself.

"And—why—what can you mean by speaking of him?" repeated Mervyn, unaccountably agitated.

"I speak *for* him, sir, by your leave. Suppose he greets you with a message—and you don't care to hear it?"

"You're mad," whispered Mervyn, with an icy stare, to whom the whole colloquy began to shape itself into a dreadful dream.

"Belike *you're* mad, sir," answered Irons, in a grim, ugly tone, but with face unmoved; "'Twas not a light matter brought me here—a message—there—well!—your right honourable father, that lies in lead and oak, without a name on his coffin—

lid, would have you to know that what he said was—as it should be—and I can prove it”——

“What?—he said *what?*—what is it?—what can you prove? Speak out, sirrah!” and his eyes shone white in the moonlight, and his hand was advanced towards Irons’ throat, and he looked half beside himself, and trembling all over.

“Put down your hand, or you hear no more from me,” said Irons, also a little transformed.

Mervyn silently lowered his hand clenched by his side, and, with compressed lips, nodded an impatient sign to him.

“Yes, sir, he’d have you to understand he never did it, and I can prove it—*but I won’t!*”

That moment, something glittered in Mervyn’s hand, and he strode toward Irons, overturning a chair with a crash.

“I have you—come on and you’re a dead man,” said the clerk, in a hoarse voice, drawing into the deep darkness toward the door, with the dull gleam of a pistol-barrel just discernible in his extended hand.

“Stay—don’t go,” cried Mervyn, in a piercing voice; “I conjure—I implore—whatever you are, come back—see, I’m unarmed,” (and he flung his sword back toward the window.)

“You, young gentlemen, are always for drawing upon poor bodies—how would it have gone if I had not looked to myself, sir, and come furnished?” said Irons, in his own level tone.



"I don't know—I don't *care*—I don't care if I were dead. Yes, yes, 'tis true, I almost wish he had shot me."

"Mind, sir, you're on honour," said the clerk, in his old tone, as he glided slowly back, his right hand in his coat pocket, and his eye with a quiet suspicion fixed upon Mervyn, and watching his movements.

"I don't know what or who you are, but if ever you knew what human feeling is—I say, if you are anything at all capable of compassion, you will kill me at a blow rather than trifle any longer with the terrible hope that has been my torture—I believe, my insanity all my life."

"Well, sir," said Irons, mildly, and with that serene suspicion, of a smile on his face, "if you wish to talk to me you must take me different; for, to say truth, I was nearer killing you that time than you were aware, and all the time I mean you no harm! and yet, if I thought you were going to say to anybody living, Zekiel Irons, the clerk, was here on Tuesday night, I believe I'd shoot you now."

"You wish your visit secret: well, you have my honour, no one living shall hear of it," said Mervyn. "Go on."

"I've little to say, your honour; but, first, do you think your servants heard the noise, just now?"

"The old woman's deaf, and her daughter dare

not stir after night-fall. You need fear no interruption."

"Ay, the house is haunted, but dead men tell no tales. 'Tis the living I fear. I thought it would be darker—the clouds broke up strangely, 'tis as much as my life's worth me to be seen near this Tyled House; and never you speak to me nor seem to know me when you chance to meet me, do you mind, sir? I'm bad enough myself, but there's some that's worse."

"'Tis agreed, there shall be no recognition," answered Mervyn.

"There's them watching me that can see in the clouds, or the running waters, what you're thinking of a mile away, that can move as soft as ghosts, and can grip as hard as hell, when need is. So be patient for a bit—I gave you the message—I tell you 'tis true; and as to my proving it at present, I can, you see, and I can't; but the hour is coming, only be patient, and swear, sir, upon your soul and honour, that you won't let me come to perdition by reason of speaking the truth."

"On my soul and honour, I mean it," answered Mervyn. "Go on."

"Nor ever tell, high or low, rich or poor, man, woman, or child, that I came here; because—no matter."

"That I promise too; for Heaven's sake, go on."

"If you please, sir, no, not a word more till the time comes," answered Irons; "I'll go as I

came." And he shoved up the window-sash and got out lightly upon the grass, and glided away among the gigantic old fruit-trees, and was lost before a minute.

Perhaps he came intending more. He had seemed for a while to have made up his mind, Mervyn thought, to a full disclosure, and then he hesitated, and, on second thoughts, drew back. Barren and tantalizing, however, as was this strange conference, it was yet worth worlds, as indicating the quarter from which information might ultimately be hoped for.

## CHAPTER VIII.

IN WHICH THE RECTOR COMES HOME, AND LILY SPEAKS  
HER MIND, AND TIME GLIDES ON, AND AUNT REBECCA  
CALLS AT THE ELMS.

NEXT morning, punctual at the early breakfast-hour of those days, the cheery voice of the old Rector was heard at the garden rails that fronted the house, and out ran Tom Clinton, from the stable-yard, and bid his "Raverence," with homely phrase, and with a pleasant grin, "welcome home," and held his bridle and stirrup, while the Parson, with a kind smile, and half a dozen inquiries, and the air of a man who, having made a long journey and a distant sojourn, expands on beholding old faces and the sights of home again; he had been away, to be sure, only one night and a part of a day, but his heart clave to his home and his darling; and Lilius ran to the garden-gate to meet him, with her old smile and greeting it seemed fonder and more tender than ever, and then they kissed and hugged and kissed again, and he patted her cheek and thought she looked a little pale, but would not say anything just then that was not altogether cheerful; and so they stepped up the two or three yards of gravel walk—she at his

right side, with her right hand in his and her left clinging by his arm, and nestling close by his side, and leading him up to the house like a beloved captive.

And so at breakfast he narrated all his adventures, and told who were at the dinner party, and described two fine ladies' dresses—for the Doctor had skill in millinery, though it was as little known as Don Quixote's talent for making bird-cages and tooth-picks, confided, as we remember, in one of his conversations with honest Sancho, under the cork trees. He told her his whole innocent little budget of gossip, in his own simple, pleasant way; and his little Lily sat looking on her beloved old man, and smiling, but saying little, and her eyes often filling with tears; and he looked when he chanced to see it—wistfully and sadly for an instant, but he made no remark.

And some time after, as she happened to pass the study-door, he called her—"Little Lily, come here." And in she came; and there was the Doctor, all alone and erect before his bookshelves, plucking down a volume here, and putting up one there, and—

"Shut the door, little Lily," says he gently and cheerily, going on with his work. "I had a letter, yesterday evening, my darling, from Captain Devereux, and he tells me that he's very much attached to you; and I don't wonder at his being in love with little Lily—he could not help

it." And he laughed fondly, and was taking down a volume that rather stuck in its place, so he could not turn to look at her; for, the truth was, he supposed she was blushing, and could not bear to add to her confusion; and he, though he continued his homely work, and clapped the sides of his books together, and blew on their tops, and went so simply and plainly to the point, was flushed and very nervous himself; for, though he thought of her marriage at some time or another as a thing that was to be, still it had seemed a long way off. And now, now it was come, and little Lily was actually going to be married—going away—and her place would know her no more; and her greeting and her music would be missed in the evening, and the garden lonely, and the Elms dark, without Lily.

"And he want's to marry my little Lily, if she'll have him. And what does my darling wish me to say to him;" and he spoke very cheerily.

"My darling, *you're* my darling; and your little Lily will never, never leave you. She'll stay." And here the little speech stopped, for she was crying, with her arms about his neck; and the old man cried, too, and smiled over her, and patted her gracious head, with a little trembling laugh, and said, "God bless you, my treasure."

"Well, little Lily, will you have him?" he said, after a little pause.

"No, my darling, no!" she answered, still crying.

"You *won't* have him?"

"No—no—never!"

"Well, little Lily, I won't answer his letter to-day; there's no hurry, you know. And, if you are of the same mind to-morrow, you can just say you wish me to write."

"Change, I can't; my answer will always be the same—always the same."

And she kissed him again, and went toward the door; but she turned back, drying her eyes, with a smile, and said—

"No, your little Lily will stay with her darling old man, and be a pleasant old maid, like Aunt Becky; and I'll play and sing your favourite airs, and Sally and I will keep the house; and we'll be happier in the Elms, I'm determined, than ever we were—and won't you call me, darling, when you're going out?"

So little Lily ran away, and up stairs; and as she left the study and its beloved tenant, at every step the air seemed to darken round her, and her heart to sink. And she turned the key in her door, and threw herself on the bed; and, with her face to the pillow, cried as if her heart would break.

So the summer had mellowed into autumn, and the fall of the leaf, and Devereux did not return; and, it was alleged in the club, on good authority,

that he was appointed on the staff of the Commander of the Forces; and Puddock had a letter from him, dated in England, with little or no news in it; and Dr. Walsingham had a long epistle from Malaga, from honest Dan Loftus, full of Spanish matter for Irish history, and stating, with many regrets, that his honourable pupil had taken ill of a fever. And this bit of news speedily took wind, and was discussed with a good deal of interest, and some fun, at the club; and the odds were freely given and taken upon the event.

The politics of Belmont were still pretty much in the old position. The General had not yet returned, and Aunt Rebecca and Gertrude fought pitched battles, as heretofore, on the subject of Dangerfield. That gentleman had carried so many points in his life by simply waiting, that he was nothing daunted by the obstacles which the caprice of the young lady presented to the immediate accomplishment of his plans. And those which he once deliberately formed, were never abandoned for trifles.

So when Aunt Becky and Miss Gertrude at length agreed on an armistice—the condition being that the question of Mr. Dangerfield's bliss or misery was to stand over for judgment until the General's return, which could not now be deferred more than two or three weeks—the amorous swain, on being apprized of the terms by Aunt Rebecca, acquiesced with alacrity, in a



handsome, neat, and gallant little speech, and kissed Aunt Rebecca's slender and jewelled hand, with a low bow and a grim smile, all which she received very graciously.

Of course, Dangerfield knew pretty well how matters stood; he was not a man to live in a dream; facts were his daily bread. He knew to a month how old he was, and pretty exactly how time had dealt with his personal charms. He had a very exact and cynical appreciation of the terms, on which Miss Chatterworth would—if at all—become and continue to be his wife. But he wanted her—she suited him exactly; and all he needed to make his kingdom sure, when he had obtained her, was his legal rights. He was no Petruchio; neither was it his theory to rule by love. He had a different way. Without bluster, and without wheedling, he had the art of making those who were under his rule perfectly submissive; sooner or later they all came to fear him as a child does a spectre. He had no misgivings about the peace of his household.

In the meantime Gertrude grew happier and more like herself, and Aunt Rebecca had her own theories about the real state of that young lady's affections, and her generally unsuspected relations with others.

Aunt Rebecca called at the Elms to see Lilies Walsingham, and sat down beside her on the sofa.

"Lily, child, you're not looking yourself. I'll

send you some drops. You must positively nurse yourself. I'm almost sorry I did not bring Dr. Toole."

"Indeed I'm glad you did not, Aunt Becky; I take excellent care of myself. I have not been out for three whole days."

And you must not budge, darling, while this east wind continues. D'ye mind? And what do you think, my dear, I do believe I've discovered the secret reason of Gertrude's repugnance to Mr Dangerfield's most advantageous offer."

"Oh, indeed!" said Lily, becoming interested.

"Well, I suppose you suspected she *had* a secret?" said Aunt Rebecca.

"I can only say, dear Aunt Becky, she has not told it to *me*."

"Now, listen to me, my dear," said Aunt Becky, laying her fan upon Lily's arm. "So sure as you sit there, Gertrude likes somebody, and I think I shall soon know who he is. Can you conjecture, my dear?" And Aunt Rebecca paused, looking, Lilius thought, rather pale, and with a kind of smile too.

"No," said Lilius; "no, I really can't."

"Well, maybe when I tell you I've reason to think he's one of our officers here. Eh? Can you guess?" said Aunt Becky, holding her fan to her mouth, and looking straight before her.

It was now Lily's turn to look pale for a moment, and then to blush so much that her ears

tingled, and her eyes dropped to the carpet. She had time to recover though, for Aunt Becky, as I've said, was looking straight before her, a little pale, awaiting the result of Lily's presumed ruminations. A moment satisfied her it could not be Devereux, and she was soon quite herself again.

"An officer! no, Aunt Becky—there certainly is Captain Cluffe, who always joins your party when you and Gertrude go down to hear the band, and Lieutenant Puddock, too, who does the same—but you know"——

"Well, my dear, all in good time. Gertrude's very secret, and proud, too; but I shall know very soon. I've ascertained, my dear, that an officer came under the window the other evening, and sang a verse of a French chanson, from the meadow, in a cloak, if you please, with a guitar. I could name his name, my dear"——

"Do, pray, tell me," said Lily, whose curiosity was all alive.

"Why—a—not yet, my dear," answered Aunt Becky, looking down; "there are—there's a reason—but the affair, I may tell you, began, in earnest, on the very day on which she refused Mr. Mervyn. But I forgot you did not know *that* either—however, you'll never mention it." And she kissed her cheek, calling her "my wise little Lily."

"And, my dear, it has been going on so regu-

larly ever since, with, till very lately, so little disguise, that I only wonder everybody dosen't see it as plain as I do myself; and Lily, my dear," continued Aunt Rebecca, energetically, rising from the sofa, as some object caught her eye through the glass-door in the garden, "your beautiful roses are all trailing in the mud. What on earth is Hogan about? and there, see, just at the door, a boxful of nails!—I'd nail his ear to the wall if he were mine," and Aunt Rebecca glanced sharply through the glass, this way and that, for the offending gardener, who, happily, did not appear. Then off went Aunt Becky to something else; and in a little time remembered the famous academy in Martin's-row, and looking at her watch, took her leave in a prodigious hurry, and followed by Dominick, in full livery, and two dogs, left Liliat again to the society of her own sad thoughts.

## CHAPTER IX.

IN WHICH DR. STURK TRIES THIS WAY AND THAT FOR A  
REPRIEVE ON THE EVE OF EXECUTION.

So time crept on, and the day arrived when Sturk must pay his rent, or take the ugly consequences. The day before he spent in Dublin financiering. It was galling and barren work. He had to ask favours of fellows whom he hated, and to stand their refusals, and pretend to believe their lying excuses, and appear to make quite light of it, though every failure stunned him like a blow of a bludgeon; and as he strutted jauntily off with a bilious smirk, he was well-nigh at his wits' end. It was dark as he rode out by the low road to Chapelizod—crest-fallen, beaten—scowling in the darkness through his horse's ears along the straight black line of road, and wishing, as he passed the famous Dog-house, that he might be stopped and plundered, and thus furnished with a decent excuse for his penniless condition, and a plea in which all the world would sympathize for a short indulgence—and, faith! he did not much care if they sent a bullet through his harassed brain. But the highwaymen, like the bankers, seemed to know, by instinct, that he had not a

guinea, and declined to give him even the miserable help he coveted.

When he got home he sent down for Cluffe to the Phoenix, and got him to take Nutter, who was there also, aside, and ask him for a little time, or to take a part of the rent. Though the latter would not have helped him much; for he could not make out ten pounds just then, were it to save his life. But Nutter only said—

“The rent’s not mine; I can’t give it or lose it; and Sturk’s not safe. Will *you* lend it? *I* can’t.”

This brought Cluffe to reason. He had opened the business, like a jolly companion, in a generous, full-blooded way.

“Well, by Jove! Nutter, I can’t blame you; for you see, between ourselves, I’m afraid ’tis as you say. We of the Royal Irish have done, under the rose, you know, all we can; and I’m sorry the poor devil has run himself into a scrape; but, hang it, we must have a conscience; and if you think there’s a risk of losing it, why I don’t see that I can press you.”

The reader must not suppose when Cluffe said, “we of the Royal Irish,” in connexion with some pecuniary kindness shown to Sturk, that that sensible Captain had given away any of his money to the Surgeon; but Sturk, in their confidential conference, had hinted something about a “helping hand,” which Cluffe coughed off, and mentioned

that Puddock had lent him fifteen pounds the week before.

And so he had, though little Puddock was one of the poorest officers in the corps. But he had no vices, and husbanded his little means carefully, and was very kindly and off-hand in assisting to the extent of his little means a brother in distress, and never added advice when so doing—for he had high notions of politeness—or, in all his life, divulged any of these little money transactions.

“Sturk stood at his drawing-room window, with his hat on, looking towards the Phoenix, and waiting for Cluffe’s return. When he could stand the suspense no longer, he went down and waited at his door-steps. And the longer Cluffe stayed the more did Sturk establish himself in the conviction that the interview had prospered, and that his ambassador was coming to terms with Nutter. He did not know that the entire question had been settled in a minute-and-a-half, and that Cluffe was at that moment rattling away at Backgammon with his arch-enemy, Toole, in a corner of the club parlour.

It was not till Cluffe, as he emerged from the Phoenix, saw Sturk’s figure stalking in the glimpses of the moon, under the village elm, that he suddenly recollected and marched up to him. Sturk stood, with his face and figure mottled over with the shadows of the moving leaves and the withered ones dropping about him, his hands in his pockets,

and a crown-piece—I believe it was his last available coin just then—shut up fast and tight in his cold fingers, with his heart in his mouth, and whistling a little to show his unconcern.

“Well,” said Sturk, “he won’t, of course?”

Cluffe shook his head.

“Very good—I’ll manage it another way,” said Sturk, confidently. “Good night;” and Sturk walked off briskly towards the turnpike.

“He might have said ‘thank you,’ I think,” Cluffe said, looking after him with a haughty leer—“mixing myself up in his plaguey affairs, and asking favours of fellows like Nutter.” But just then, having reached the corner next the Phoenix, Sturk hesitated, and Cluffe thinking he might possibly turn back and ask him for money, turned on his heel, and, like a prudent fellow, trudged rapidly off to his lodgings.

Toole and O’Flaherty were standing in the doorway of the Phoenix, observing the brief and secret meeting under the elm.

“That’s Sturk,” said Toole.

O’Flaherty grunted acquiescence.

Toole watched attentively till the gentlemen separated, and then glancing on O’Flaherty from the corner of his eye, with a knowing smile, “tipped him the wink,” as the phrase went in those days.

“An affair of honour!” said O’Flaherty, squaring himself. He smelt powder in everything.



"More like an affair of *dishonour*," said Toole, buttoning his coat. "He's been 'kiting' all over the town. Nutter can distrain for his rent to-morrow, and Cluffe called him outside the bar to speak with him; put that and that together, sir." And home went Toole.

Sturk, indeed, had no plan, and just then was incapable of forming any. He changed his route, not knowing why, and posted over the bridge, and a good way along the Inchicore road; and then turned about and strode back again and over the bridge, without stopping, and on towards Dublin; and suddenly the moon shone out, and he recollected how late it was growing, and so turned about and walked homeward.

As he passed by the row of houses looking across the road towards the river, from Mr. Irons' hall-door step, a well-known voice accosted him—

"A thweet night, Doctor—the moon tho thilver bright—the air tho thoft!"

It was little Puddock, whose hand and face were raised toward the sweet regent of the sky.

"Mighty fine night," said Sturk, and he paused for a second. It was Puddock's way to be more than commonly friendly and polite with any man who owed him money; and Sturk, who thought, perhaps, rightly, that the world of late had been looking cold and black upon him, felt, in a sort of way, thankful for the greeting and its cordial onte.

“A night like this, my dear sir, brings us under the marble balconies of the palace of the Capulets, and sets us repeating ‘on such a night sat Dido on the wild seabanks’—you remember—‘and with a willow wand, waved her love back to Carthage’—or places us upon the haunted platform, where buried Denmark revisits the glimpses of the moon. My dear Doctor, ’tis wonderful—isn’t it—how much of our enjoyment of Nature we owe to Shakspeare—’twould be a changed world with us, Doctor, if Shakspeare had not written——” Then there was a little pause, Sturk standing still.

“God be wi’ ye, Lieutenant,” said he, suddenly taking his hand. “If there were more men like you there would be fewer broken hearts in the world.” And away went Sturk.

## CHAPTER X.

SHOWING HOW CHARLES NUTTER'S BLOW DESCENDED, AND  
WHAT PART THE SILVER SPECTACLES BORE IN THE  
CRISIS.

IN the morning the distress and keepers were in Sturk's house.

We must not be too hard upon Nutter. 'Tis a fearful affair, and no child's play, this battle of life. Sturk had assailed him like a beast of prey; not Nutter, to be sure, only Lord Castlemallard's agent. Of that functionary his wolfish instinct craved the flesh, bones, and blood. Sturk had no other way to live and grow fat. Nutter or he must go down. The little fellow saw his great red maw and rabid fangs at his throat. If he let him off, he would devour him, and lie in his bed, with his cap on, and his caudles and cordials all round, as the wolf did by Little Red Riding Hood's grandmamma; and with the weapon which had come to hand—a heavy one too—he was going, with Heaven's help, to deal him a brain blow.

When Sturk heard in the morning that the blow was actually struck, he jumped out of bed,

and was taken with a great shivering fit, sitting on the side of it. Little Mrs. Sturk, as white as her night-cap with terror, was yet decisive in emergency, and bethought her of the brandy bottle, two glasses from which the Doctor swallowed before his teeth gave over chattering, and a more natural tint returned to his blue face.

"Oh! Barney, dear, are we ruined?" faltered poor little Mrs. Sturk.

"Ruined, indeed!" cried Sturk, with an oath, "Come in here." He thought his study was on the same floor with his bedroom, as it had been in old times in their house in Limerick, ten or twelve years before.

"That's the nursery, Barney, dear," she said thinking, in the midst of the horror, like a true mother, of the children's sleep.

Then he remembered, and ran down to the study, and pulled out a sheaf of bills and promissory notes, and renewals thereof, making a very respectable show.

"Ruined, indeed!" he cried, hoarsely, talking to his poor little wife in the tones and with the ferocity which the image of Nutter, with which his brain was filled, called up. "Look, I say, here's one fellow owes me that—and that—and that—and there—there's a dozen in that by another—there's two more sets there pinned together—and here's an account of them all—two thousand two hundred—and—you may say, three hundred—

two thousand three hundred—owed me here; and that miscreant won't give me a day.

“Is it the rent, Barney?”

“The rent? To be sure; what else should it be?” shouted the Doctor, with a stamp.

And so pale little Mrs. Sturk stole out of the room, as her lord with bitter mutterings pitched his treasure of bad bills back again into the *escri-toire*; and she heard him slam the study door and run down stairs to browbeat and curse the men in the hall, for he had lost his head somewhat, between panic and fury. He was in his stockings and slippers, with an old flowered silk dressing-gown, and nothing more but his shirt, and looked, they said, like a madman. One of the fellows was smoking, and Sturk snatched the pipe from his mouth, and stamped it to atoms on the floor, roaring at them to know what the — brought them there; and without a pause for an answer, thundered, “And I suppose you'll not let me take my box of instruments out of the house—mind, it's worth fifty pounds; and curse me, if one of our men dies for want of them in hospital, I'll indict you both, and your employer along with you, for *murder*!” And so he railed on, till his voice failed him with a sort of choking, and there was a humming in his ears, and a sort of numbness in his head, and he thought he was going to have a fit; and then up the stairs he went again, and into his study, and resolved to

have Nutter out—and it flashed upon him that he'd say, “pay the rent first;” and then—what next? why he'd post him all over Dublin, and Chapelizod, and Leixlip, where the Lord Lieutenant and Court were.

And down he sat to a sheet of paper, with his left hand clenched on the table, and his teeth grinding together, as he ransacked his vocabulary for befitting terms; but alas, his right hand shook so that his penmanship would not do, in fact, it half frightened him. “By my soul! I believe something bad has happened me,” he muttered, and propped up his window, and looked out, half dreaming, over the church-yard on the park beyond, and the dewy overhanging hill, all pleasantly lighted up in the morning sun.

While this was going on, little Mrs. Sturk, who on critical occasions took strong resolutions promptly, made a wonderfully rapid toilet, and let herself quietly out of the street door. She had thought of Dr. Walsingham; but Sturk had lately, in one of his imperious freaks of temper, withdrawn his children from the good Doctor's catechetical class, and sent him besides, one of his sturdy, impertinent notes—and the poor little woman concluded there was no chance there. She knew little of the Rector—of the profound humility and entire placability of that noble soul.

Well, she took the opposite direction, and turning her back on the town, walked at her quickest

pace toward the Brass Castle. It was not eight o'clock yet, but the devil had been up betimes and got through a good deal of his day's work, as we have seen. The poor little woman had made up her mind to apply to Dangerfield. She had liked his talk at Belmont, where she had met him; and he inquired about the poor, and listened to some of her woful tales with a great deal of sympathy; and she knew he was very rich, and that he appreciated her Barney, and so she trudged on, full of hope, though I don't think many people who knew the world better would have given a great deal for her chance.

Dangerfield received the lady very affably, in his little parlour, where, having already despatched his early meal, he was writing letters. He looked hard at her when she came in, and again when she sat down; and when she had made an end of her long and dismal tale, he opened a sort of strong box, and took out a thin quarto and read, turning the leaves rapidly over.

"Ay, here we have him—Chapelizod—Sturk, Barnabas—Surgeon, R.I.A., assignee of John Lowe—hey! one gale day, as you call it, only!—September. How came that? Rent, £40. Why, then, he owes a whole year's rent, £40, ma'am. September, and his days of grace have expired. He ought to have paid it."

Here there came a dreadful pause, during

which nothing was heard but the sharp ticking of his watch on the table.

"Well, ma'am," he said, "when a thing comes before me, I say yes or no promptly. I like your husband, and I'll lend him the amount of his rent."

Poor little Mrs. Sturk jumped up in an ecstasy, and then felt quite sick, and sat down almost fainting, with a deathlike smile.

"There's but one condition I attach, that you tell me truly, my dear ma'am, whether you came to me directly or indirectly at his suggestion."

No, indeed, she had not; it was all her own thought; she had not dared to mention it to him, lest he should forbid her, and now she should be almost afraid to tell him where she had been.

"He'll not be very angry, depend on't, my good madam; you did wisely in coming to me. I respect your sense and energy; and should you hereafter stand in need of a friendly office, I beg you'll remember one who is disposed to help you."

Then he sat down, and wrote with a flying pen—

"MY DEAR SIR,—I have just learned from Mrs. Sturk that you have an immediate concern for forty pounds, to which, I venture to surmise, will be added some fees, etc. I take leave, therefore, to send herewith fifty guineas, which I trust will



suffice for this troublesome affair. We can talk hereafter about repayment. Mrs. Sturk has handed me a memorandum of the advance.

"Your very obedient, humble servant,

"GILES DANGERFIELD.

"The Brass Castle, Chapelized,  
2nd October, 1767."

Then poor little Mrs. Sturk was breaking out into a delirium of gratitude. But he put his hand upon her arm kindly, and with a little bow and an emphasis, he said—

"Pray, not a *word*, my dear madam. Just write a line;" and he slid his desk before her with a sheet of paper on it; "and say Mr. Dangerfield has this day handed me a loan of fifty guineas for my husband, Doctor Barnabas Sturk. Now sign, if you please, and add the date. Very good!"

"I'm afraid you can hardly read it—my fingers tremble a little," said Mrs. Sturk, with a wild little deprecatory titter, and for the first time very near crying.

"'Tis mighty well," said Dangerfield, politely; and he accompanied the lady with the note and fifty guineas, made up in a little rouleau, fast in her hand, across his little garden, and with—"A fine morning truly," and "God bless you, madam," and one of his peculiar smiles, he let her out through his little wicket on the high road. And

so away went Mrs. Sturk, scarce feeling the ground under her feet; and Giles Dangerfield, carrying his white head very erect, with an approving conscience, and his silver spectacles flashing through the leaves of his lilacs and laburnums, returned to his parlour.

Mrs. Sturk, who could hardly keep from running, glided along at a wonderful rate, wondering now and then how quickly the whole affair—so awful as it seemed to her in magnitude—was managed. Dangerfield had neither hurried her nor himself, and yet he despatched the matter and got her away in less than five minutes.

In little more than a quarter of an hour after, Dr. Sturk descended his door-steps in full costume, and marched down the street and passed the artillery barrack, from his violated fortress, as it were, with colours flying, drums beating, and ball in mouth. He paid the money down at Nutter's table, in the small room at the Phoenix, where he sat in the morning to receive his rents, eyeing the agent with a fixed smirk of hate and triumph, and telling down each piece on the table with a fierce clink that had the ring of a curse in it. Little Nutter met his stare of suppressed fury with an eye just as steady and malign, and a countenance blackened by disappointment. Not a word was heard but Sturk's insolent tones counting the gold at every clang on the table.

Nutter shoved him a receipt across the table, and swept the gold into his drawer.

"Go over, Tom," he said to the bailiff, in a stern low tone, "and see the men don't leave the house till the fees are paid."

And Sturk laughed a very pleasant laugh, you may be sure, over his shoulder at Nutter, as he went out at the door.

When he was gone Nutter stood up, and turned his face toward the empty grate. I have seen some plain faces once or twice look so purely spiritual, and others at times so infernal, as to acquire in their homeliness a sort of awful grandeur; and from every feature of Nutter's dark wooden face was projected at that moment a supernatural glare of baffled hatred that dilated to something almost sublime.

## CHAPTER XI.

RELATING HOW, IN THE WATCHES OF THE NIGHT, A VISION  
CAME TO STURK, AND HIS EYES WERE OPENED.

STURK's triumph was only momentary. He was in ferocious spirits, indeed, over the breakfast-table, and bolted quantities of buttered toast and eggs, swallowed cups of tea, one after the other, almost at a single gulp, all the time gabbling with a truculent volubility, and every now and then a thump, which made his spoon jingle in his saucer, and poor, little Mrs. Sturk start, and whisper, "Oh, my dear!" But after he had done defying and paying-off the whole world, and showing his wife, and half convincing himself, that he was the cleverest and finest fellow alive, a letter was handed to him, which reminded him, in a dry, short way, of those more formidable and imminent dangers that rose up, apparently insurmountable before him; and he retired to his study to ruminate again, and chew the cud of bitter fancy, and to write letters and tear them to pieces, and, finally, as was his wont, after hospital hours, to ride into Dublin, to bore his attorney with barren inventions and hopeless schemes of extrication.

Sturk came home that night with a hang-dog

and jaded look, and taciturn and half desperate. But he called for whiskey, and drank a glass of that cordial, and brewed a jug of punch in silence, and swallowed glass after glass, and got up a little, and grew courageous and flushed, and prated away, rather loud and thickly with a hiccough now and then, and got to sleep earlier than usual.

Somewhere among "the small hours" of the night, he awoke suddenly, recollecting something.

"I have it," cried Sturk, with an oath, and an involuntary kick at the foot-board, that made his slumbering helpmate bounce.

"What is it, Barney, dear?" squalled she, diving under the bed-clothes, with her heart in her mouth.

"It's like a revelation," cried Sturk, with another oath; and that was all Mrs. Sturk heard of it for some time. But the Surgeon was wide awake, and all alive about it, whatever it was. He sat straight up in the bed, with his lips energetically compressed, and his eye-brows screwed together, and his shrewd, hard eyes rolling thoughtfully over the curtains, in the dark, and now and then an ejaculation of wonder, or a short oath, would slowly rise up, and burst from his lips, like a bubble from the fermentation.

Sturk's brain was in a hubbub. He had fifty plans, all jostling and clamouring together, like a nursery of unruly imps—"Take *me*"—"No, take *me*"—"No *me*!" He had been dreaming like mad,

and his sensorium was still all alive with the images of fifty phantasmagoria, filled up by imagination and conjecture, and a strange, painfully-sharp remembrance of things past—all whirling in a carnival of roystering but dismal riot—masks, dice, laughter, maledictions, drumming, fair ladies, tipsy youths, mountebanks, and assassins; tinkling serenades, the fatal clang and rattle of the dice-box, and long-drawn screams.

There was no more use in Sturk's endeavours to reduce all this to order, than in reading the Riot Act to a Walpurgis gathering. So he sat muttering unconscious ejaculations, and looking down, as it were, from his balcony, waiting for the uproar to abate; and when the air did clear and cool a little, there was just one face that remained impassive, and serenely wicked before his eyes.

When things arrived at this stage, and he had gathered his recollections about him, and found himself capable of thinking, being a man of action, up he bounced and struck a light, vaulted into his breeches, hauled on his stockings, hustled himself into his roquelaure, and, candle in hand, in slippered feet, glided, like a ghost, down stairs to the back drawing-room, which, as we know, was his study.

The night was serene and breathless. The sky had cleared, and the moonlight slept mistily on the soft slopes of the park. The landscape was a

febrifuge, and cooled and quieted his brain as he stood before it at his open window, in solitary meditation. It was not till his slowly wandering eye lighted on the church-yard, with a sort of slight shock, that he again bestirred himself.

There it lay, with its white tombstones and its shadows spread under him seeming to say—"Ay, here I am; the narrow goal of all your plans. Not one of the glimmering memorials you see that does not cover what once was a living world of long-headed schemes, chequered remembrances, and well-kept secrets. Here lie your brother-plotters, all in bond, only some certain inches below; with their legs straight and their arms by their sides, as when grim Captain DEATH called the stern word 'attention!' with their sightless faces and unthinking foreheads turned up to the moon. Dr. Sturk, there are lots of places for you to choose among—suit yourself—here—or here—or maybe here."

And so Sturk closed the window and remembered his dream, and looked out stealthily but sternly from the door, which was ajar, and shut it sharply, and with his hands in his breeches' pockets, took a quick turn to the window; his soul had got into harness again, and he was busy thinking. Then he snuffed the candle, and then quickened his invention by another brisk turn; and then he opened his desk, and sat down to write a note.

"Yes," said he to himself, pausing for a minute, with his pen in his fingers, "'tis as certain as that I sit here."

Well, he wrote the note. There was a kind of smile on his face, which was paler than usual all the while; and he read it over, and threw himself back in his chair, and then read it over again, and did not like it, and tore it up.

Then he thought hard for a while, leaning upon his elbow; and took a couple of great pinches of snuff, and snuffed his candle again, and, as it were, snuffed his wits, and took up his pen with a little flourish, and dashed off another, and read it, and liked it, and gave it a little sidelong nod, as though he said, "You'll do;" and, indeed, considering all the time and thought he spent upon it, the composition was no great wonder, being, after all, no more than this:—

"DEAR SIR,—Will you give me the honour of a meeting at my house this morning, as you pass through the town? I shall remain within till noon; and hope for some minutes' private discourse with you.

"Your most obedient, very humble servant,  
"BARNABAS STURK."

Then he sealed it with a great red seal, large enough for a patent almost, impressed with the Sturk arms—a boar's head for crest, and a



flaunting scroll, with "Dentem fulmineum cave" upon it. Then he peeped again from the window to see if the gray of the morning had come, for he had left his watch under his bolster, and longed for the time of action.

Then up stairs went Sturk; and so, with the note, like a loaded pistol, over the chimney, he popped into bed, where he lay awake in agitating rumination, determined to believe that he had seen the last of those awful phantoms—those greasy bailiffs—that smooth, smirking, formidable attorney; and—curse him—that bilious marshal's deputy, with the purplish, pimply tinge about the end of his nose and the tops of his cheeks, that beset his bed in a moving ring—this one pushing out a writ, and that rumpling open a parchment deed, and the other fumbling with his keys, and extending his open palm for the garnish. Avaunt! He had found out a charm to rout them all, and they shan't now lay a finger on him—a short and sharp way to clear himself; and so I believe he had.

## CHAPTER XII.

CONCERNING A LITTLE REHEARSAL IN CAPTAIN CLUFFE'S  
LODGING, AND A CERTAIN CONFIDENCE BETWEEN DR.  
STURK AND MR. DANGERFIELD.

MRS. STURK, though very quiet, was an active little body, with a gentle, anxious face. She was up and about very early, and ran down to the King's House, to ask Mrs. Colonel Strafford, who was very kind to her, and a patroness of Sturk's, to execute a little commission for her in Dublin, as she understood she was going into town that day, and the Doctor's horse had gone lame, and was in the hands of the farrier. So the good lady undertook it, and offered a seat in her carriage to Dr. Sturk, should his business call him to town. The carriage would be at the door at half-past eleven.

And as she trotted home—for her Barney's breakfast-hour was drawing nigh—whom should she encounter upon the road, just outside the town, but their grim spectacled benefactor, Dangerfield, accompanied by, and talking in his usual short way to Nutter, the arch-enemy, who, to say truth, looked confoundedly black; and she

heard the silver spectacles say, " 'Tis, you understand, my own thoughts *only* I speak, Mr. Nutter."

The fright and the shock of seeing Nutter so near her, made her salutation a little awkward; and she had, besides an instinctive consciousness that they were talking about the terrible affair of yesterday. Dangerfield on meeting her, bid Nutter good morning suddenly, and turned about with Mrs. Sturk, who had to slacken her pace a little, for the potent agent chose to walk rather slowly.

"A fine morning after all the rain, madam. How well the hills look," and he pointed across the Liffey with his cane; "and the view down the river," and he turned about, pointing towards Inchicore.

I believe he wanted to see how far Nutter was behind them. He was walking in the opposite direction, looking down on the kerb-stones of the footpath, and touching them with his cane, as if counting them as he proceeded. Dangerfield nodded, and his spectacles in the morning sun seemed to flash two sudden gleams of lightning after him.

"I've been giving Nutter a bit of my mind, madam, about that procedure of his. He's very angry with me, but a great deal more so with your husband, who has my sympathies with him; and I think I'm safe in saying he's likely soon to have

an offer of employment under my Lord Castlemallard, if it suits him."

And he walked on, and talked of other things in short sentences, and parted with Mrs. Sturk with a grim brief kindness at the door, and so walked with his wiry step away towards the Brass Castle, where his breakfast awaited him, and he disappeared round the corner of Martin's-row.

"And which way was he going when you met him and that—that *Nutter*?" demanded Sturk, who was talking in high excitement, and not being able to find an epithet worthy of Nutter, made it up by his emphasis and his scowl. She told him.

"H'm! then, he can't have got my note yet!"

She looked at him in a way that plainly said, "what note?" but Sturk said no more, and he had trained her to govern her curiosity.

As Dangerfield passed Captain Cluffe's lodgings, he heard the gay tinkle of a guitar, and an amorous duet, not altogether untunefully sung to that accompaniment; and he beheld little Lieutenant Puddock's back, with a broad scarlet and gold ribbon across it, supporting the instrument on which he was industriously thrumming, at the window, while Cluffe, who was giving a high note, with all the tenderness he could throw into his robust countenance, and one of those involuntary grimaces which in amateurs will sometimes accompany a vocal effort, caught the eye of the cynical wayfarer, and stopped short with a dis-

concerted little cough and a shake of his chops, and a grim, rather red nod, and " Good morning, Mr. Dangerfield " Puddock also saluted, still thrumming a low chord or two as he did so, for he was not ashamed, like his stout play-mate, and saw nothing incongruous in their early minstrelsy.

The fact is, these gallant officers were rehearsing a pretty little entertainment they designed for the ladies at Belmont. It was a serenade, in short, and they had been compelled to postpone it in consequence of the broken weather; and though both gentlemen were, of course, romantically devoted to their respective objects, yet there were no two officers in his Majesty's service more bent upon making love with a due regard to health and comfort than our friends Cluffe and Puddock. Puddock, indeed, was disposed to conduct it in the true masquerading spirit, leaving the ladies to guess at the authors of that concord of sweet sounds with which the amorous air of night was to quiver round the walls and groves of Belmont; and Cluffe, externally acquiescing, had yet made up his mind, if a decent opportunity presented, to be detected and made prisoner, and that the honest troubadours should sup on a hot broil, and sip some of the absent General's curious Madeira at the feet of their respective mistresses, with all the advantage which a situation so romantic and so private would offer.

So "tinkle, tinkle, twang, twang, THRUM !"

went the industrious and accomplished Puddock's guitar; and the voices of the enamoured swains kept tolerable tune and time; and Puddock would say, "Don't you think, Captain Cluffe, 'twould perhapth go better if we weren't to try that shake upon A. Do let's try the last two barth without it;" and "I'm thorry to trouble you, but jutht wonth more, if you pleathe—

But hard ith the chathe my thad heart mutht purthue,  
While Daphne, thweet Daphne, thill flieth from my view."

Puddock, indeed, had strict notions about rehearsing, and, on occasions like this, assumed managerial airs, and in a very courteous way took the absolute command of Captain Cluffe, who sang till he was purple, and his belts and braces cracked again, not venturing to mutiny, though he grumbled a little aside.

So when Dangerfield passed Cluffe's lodging again, returning on his way into Chapelizod, the songsters were at it still. And he smiled his pleasant smile once more, and nodded at poor old Cluffe, who this time was seriously put out, and flushed up quite fiercely, and said almost in a mutiny—

"Hang it, Puddock, I believe you'd keep a fellow singing ballads over the street all day. Didn't you see that cursed fellow Dangerfield, sneering at us—curse him—I suppose he never heard a gentleman sing before; and, by Jove,

Puddock, you know you do make a fellow go over the same thing so often it's enough to make a dog laugh."

A minute after Dangerfield had mounted Sturk's door-steps, and asked to see the Doctor. He was ushered up-stairs and into that back drawing-room which we know so well. Sturk rose as he entered.

"Your most obedient, Mr. Dangerfield," said the Doctor, with an anxious bow.

"Good morning, sir," said Dangerfield. "I've got your note, and am here in consequence; what can I do?"

Sturk glanced at the door, to see it was shut, and then said—

"Mr. Dangerfield, I've recollected a—*something*."

"You *have*? ho! Well, my good sir?"

"You, I know, were acquainted with—with *Charles Archer*?"

Sturk looked for a moment on the spectacles, and then dropped his eyes.

"Charles Archer," answered Dangerfield, promptly, "yes, to be sure. But, Charles, you know, got into trouble; and 'tis not an acquaintance you or I can boast of; and, in fact, we must not mention him; and I have long ceased to know anything of him."

"But, I've just remembered his address; and there's something about his private history which

I very well know, and which gives me a claim upon his kind feeling, and he's now in a position to do me a material service; and there's no man living, Mr. Dangerfield, has so powerful an influence with him as yourself. Will you use it in my behalf, and attach me to you by lasting gratitude?"

Sturk looked straight at Dangerfield; and Dangerfield looked at him, quizzically, in return; after a short pause—

"I *will*," said Dangerfield, with a sprightly decision. *But*, you, know, Charles is not a fellow to be trifled with—hey? and we must not mention his name—you understand—or hint where he lives, or anything about him, in short."

"That's plain," answered Sturk.

"You're going into town, Mrs. Sturk tells me, in Mrs. Strafford's carriage. Well, when you return this evening, put down in writing what you think Charles can do for you, and I'll take care he considers it."

"I thank you, sir," said Sturk, solemnly.

"And hark ye, you'd better go about your business in town—do you see—just as usual; 'twill excite inquiry if you don't; so you must in this and other things proceed exactly as I direct you," said Dangerfield.

"Exactly, sir, depend on't," answered Sturk.

"Good day," said Dangerfield.

"Adieu," said the Doctor; and they shook hands, gravely.



On the lobby Dangerfield encountered Mrs. Sturk, and had a few pleasant words with her, patting the bull-heads of the children, and went down stairs, smiling and nodding; and Mrs. Sturk popped quietly into the study, and found her husband leaning on the chimney piece, and swabbing his face with his handkerchief—strangely pale—and looking, as the good lady afterwards said, for all the world as if he had seen a ghost.

## CHAPTER XIII.

THE CLOSET SCENE, WITH THE PART OF POLONIUS OMITTED.

WHEN Magnolia and the Major had gone out, each on their several devices, poor Mrs. Macnamara called Biddy, their maid, and told her, in a vehement, wheezy, confidential whisper in her ear, though there was nobody by but themselves, and the door was shut.

"Biddy, now mind—d'ye see—the lady that came to me in the end of July—do you remember?—in the black satin—you know?—she'll be here to-day, and we're going down together in her coach to Mrs. Nutter's; but that does not signify. As soon as she comes, bring her here, into this room—d'ye mind?—and go across that instant minute—d'ye mind now?—straight to Dr. Toole, and ask him to send me the peppermint drops he promised me."

Then she cross-questioned Biddy, to ascertain that she perfectly understood and clearly remembered; and, finally, she promised her half-a-crown if she performed this very simple commission to her mistress's satisfaction, and held her tongue religiously on the subject. She had apprized Toole the evening before, and now poor Mrs. Mack's suf-

ferings, she hoped, were about to be brought to a happy termination by the Doctor's ingenuity. She was, however, very nervous indeed, as the crisis approached; for such a beast as Mary Matchwell at bay was a spectacle to excite a little tremor even in a person of more nerve than fat Mrs. Macnamara.

And what could Mary Matchwell want of a conjuring conference, of all persons in the world, with poor little Mrs. Nutter? Mrs. Mack had done in this respect simply as she was bid. She had indeed no difficulty in persuading Mrs. Nutter to grant the interview. That harmless little giggling creature could not resist the mere mention of a fortune-teller. Only for Nutter, who set his face against this sort of sham witchcraft, she would certainly have asked him to treat her with a glimpse into futurity at that famous sibyl's house; and now that she had an opportunity of having the enchantress *tête-à-tête* in her own snug parlour at the Mills, she was in a delightful fuss of mystery and delight.

Mrs. Mack, indeed, from her own sad experience, felt a misgiving and a pang in introducing the formidable prophetess. But what could she do? She dared not refuse; all she could risk was an anxious hint to poor little Mrs. Nutter, "not to be telling her *anything*, good, bad, or indifferent, but just to ask her what questions she liked, and no more." Indeed, poor Mrs. Mack

was low and feverish about this assignation, and would have been more so but for the hope that her Polonius, behind the arras, would bring the woman of Endor to her knees.

All on a sudden, she heard the rumble and jingle of a hackney coach, and the clang of the horses' hoofs pulled up close under her window; her heart bounded and fluttered up to her mouth, and then dropped down like a lump of lead, and she heard a well-known voice talk a few sentences to the coachman, and then in the hall, as she supposed, to Biddy; and so she came into the room, dressed as usual in black, tall, thin, and erect, with a black hood shading her pale face, and the mist and chill of night seemed to enter along with her.

It was a great relief to poor Mrs. Mack, that she actually saw Biddy at that moment run across the street toward Toole's hall-door, and she quickly averted her conscious glance from the light-heeled handmaid.

"Pray take a chair, ma'am," said Mrs. Mack, with a pallid face, and a low courtesy.

Mistress Matchwell made a faint courtesy in return, and, without saying anything, sat down, and peered sharply round the room.

"I'm glad, ma'am, you had no dust to-day; the rain, ma'am, laid it beautiful."

The grim woman in black threw back her hood a little, and showed her pale face and thin lips,

and prominent black eyes, altogether a grisly and intimidating countenance, with something wild and suspicious in it, suiting by no means ill with her supernatural and malign pretensions.

Mrs. Mack's ear was strained to catch the sound of Toole's approach, and a pause ensued, during which she got up and poured out a glass of port for the lady, and she presented it to her deferentially. She took it, with a nod, and sipped it, thinking, as it seemed, uneasily. There was plainly something more than usual upon her mind. Mrs. Mack thought—indeed, she was quite sure—she heard a little fussing about the bed-room door, and concluded that the Doctor was getting under cover.

When Mrs. Matchwell had set her empty glass upon the table, she glided to the window, and, Mrs. Mack's guilty conscience smote her, as she saw her look towards Toole's house. It was only, however, for the coach; and having satisfied herself it was at hand, she said—

“ We'll have some minutes quite private, if you please—'t isn't my affair, you know, but yours,” said the weird woman.

There had been ample time for the arrangement of Toole's ambushade. Now was the moment. The crisis was upon her. But poor Mrs. Mack, just as she was about to say her little say about the front windows, and opposite neighbours, and the privacy of the back bed-room, and to propose

their retiring thither, felt a sinking of the heart—a deadly faintness, and an instinctive conviction that she was altogether overmatched, and that she could not hope to play successfully any sort of devil's game with that all-seeing sorceress. She had always thought she was a plucky woman till she met Mistress Mary. Before *her* her spirit died within her—her blood flowed hurriedly back to her heart, leaving her body cold, pale, and damp, and her soul quailing under the spell of fearful gaze and imperious presence.

She cleared her voice twice, and faltered an inquiry, but broke down in panic; and at that moment Biddy popped in her head—

“The Doctor, ma'am, was sent for to Lucan, an' he won't be back, till six o'clock, an' he left no peppermint drops for you, ma'am, an' do you want me, if you plase, ma'am?”

“Go down, Biddy—that'll do,” said Mrs. Mack, growing first pale, and then very red.

Mary Matchwell scented death afar off; for her the air was always tainted with ominous perfumes. Every unusual look or dubious word thrilled her with a sense of danger. Suspicion is the baleful instinct of self-preservation with which the devil gifts his children; and hers never slept.

“*What* doctor?” said Mrs. Matchwell, turning her large, dismal, wicked gaze full on Mrs. Mack.

“Doctor Toole, ma'am.” She dared not tell a

literal lie to that piercing, prominent pair of black eyes.

"And why did you send for Doctor O'Toole, ma'am?"

"I did not send for the Doctor," answered the fat lady, looking down, for she could not stand that glance that seemed to light up all the caverns of her poor soul, and make her lies stand forth self-confessed. "I did not send for him, ma'am, only for some drops he promised me. I've been very sick—I—I—I'm so miserable."

And poor Mrs. Mack's nether lip quivered, and she burst into tears.

"You're enough to provoke a saint, Mrs. Macnamara," said the woman in black, rather savagely, though coldly enough. "Why you're on the point of fortune, as it seems to me." Here poor Mrs. Mack's inarticulate lamentations waxed more vehement. "You don't believe it—very well—but where's the use of crying over your little difficulties, ma'am, like a great baby, instead of exerting yourself and thanking your best friend?"

And the two ladies sat down to a murmuring *tête-à-tête* at the far end of the room; you could have heard little more than an inarticulate cooing, and poor Mrs. Mack's sobs, and the stern—

"And is that all? I've had more trouble with you than with fifty reasonable clients—you can hardly be serious—I tell you plainly, you must

manage matters better, my good madam; for, frankly, ma'am *this* won't do."

With which that part of the conference closed, and Mary Matchwell looked out of the window. The coach stood at the door, the horses dozing patiently, with their heads together, and the coachman, with a black eye, mellowing into the yellow stage, and a cut across his nose—both doing well—was marching across from the public-house over the way, wiping his mouth in the cuff of his coat.

"Put on your riding-hood, if you please, madam, and come down with me in the coach to introduce me to Mrs. Nutter," said Mrs. Matchwell, at the same time tapping with her long bony fingers to the driver.

"There's no need of that, madam. I said what you desired, and I sent a note to her last night, and she expects you just now; and, indeed, I'd rather not go, madam, if you please."

"'Tis past that now—just do as I tell you, for come you must," answered Mrs. Matchwell.

As the old woman of Berkley obeyed, and got up and went quietly away with her visitor, though her dead flesh quivered with fear, so poor Mrs. Mack, though loath enough, submitted in silence.

"Now, you look like a body going to be hanged—you do; what's the matter with you, madam? I tell you, you mustn't look that way. Here, take a sup o' this; and she presented the



muzzle of a small bottle like a pistol at her mouth as she spoke—

“There’s a glass on the table, if you let me, ma’am,” said Mrs. Mack.

“Glass be——; here, take a mouthful.”

And she popped it between her lips; and Mrs. Mack was refreshed and her spirit revived within her.

## CHAPTER XIV.

IN WHICH PALE HECATE VISITS THE MILLS, AND CHARLES  
NUTTER, ESQ., ORDERS TEA.

POOR Mrs. Nutter, I have an honest regard for her memory. If she was scant of brains, she was also devoid of guile—giggle and respberry-jam were the leading traits of her character. And though she was slow to believe ill-natured stories, and made, in general, a horrid jumble when she essayed to relate news, except of the most elementary sort; and used to forget genealogies, and to confuse lawsuits and other family feuds, and would have made a most unsatisfactory witness upon any topic on earth, yet she was a ready sympathizer, and a restless but purblind match-maker—always suggesting or suspecting little romances, and always amazed when the eclairsissement came off. Excellent for condoling—better still for rejoicing—she would, on hearing of a surprising good match, or an unexpected son and heir, or a pleasantly-timed legacy, go off like a mild little peal of joy-bells, and keep ringing up and down and zig-zag, and to and again, in all sorts of irregular roulades, without stopping, the whole day long, with “Well, to be sure.” “Upon my conscience, now, I scarce can believe it.”

"An' isn't it pleasant, though." "Oh! the creatures—but it was badly wanted!" "Dear knows—but I'm glad—ha, ha, ha," and so on. A train of reflection and rejoicing not easily exhausted, and readily, by simple transposition, maintainable for an indefinite period. And people, when good news came, used to say, "Sally Nutter will be glad to hear that;" and though she had not a great deal of sense, and her conversation was made up principally of interjections, assisted by little gestures, and wonderful expressions of face; and though when analyzed it was not much, yet she made a cheerful noise, and her company was liked; and her friendly little gesticulation, and her turning up of the eyes, and her smiles and sighs, and her "whisht a bit," and "faith and troth now," and "whisper," and all the rest of her little budget of idiomatic expletives, made the people somehow, along with her sterling qualities, fonder of her than perhaps, having her always at hand, they were quite aware.

So they both entered the vehicle, which jingled and rattled so incessantly and so loud that connected talk was quite out of the question, and Mrs. Macnamara was glad 'twas so; and she could not help observing there was something more than the ordinary pale cast of devilment in Mary Matchwell's face—something she thought, almost frightful, and which tempted her to believe in her necromantic faculty.

So they reached Nutter's house, at the mills, a sober, gray-fronted mansion, darkened with tall trees, and in went Mrs. Mack. Little Mrs. Nutter received her in a sort of transport of eagerness, giggle, and curiosity.

"And is she really in the coach now? and, my dear, does she really tell the wonders they say? Mrs. Molloy told me—well, now, the most surprising things; and do you actually believe she's a conjuror? But you know Nutter must not know I had her here. He can't abide a fortune-teller. And what shall I ask her? I think about the pearl cross—don't you? for I *would* like to know, and then whether Nutter or his enemies—you know who I mean—will carry the day—don't you know? Doctor Sturk, my dear, and—and—but that's the chief question.

Poor Mrs. Mack glanced over her shoulder to see she wasn't watched, and whispered her in haste—

"For mercy sake, my dear, take my advice, and that is, listen to all she tells you, but tell her nothing."

"To be sure, my dear, that's only common sense," said Mrs. Nutter.

And Mary Matchwell, who thought they had been quite long enough together, descended from the carriage, and was in the hall before Mrs. Nutter was aware; and the silent apparition overawed the poor little lady, who faltered a "Good even-

ing, madam—you're very welcome—pray step in." So in they all trooped to Nutter's parlour.

So soon as little Mrs. Nutter got fairly under the chill and shadow of this inauspicious presence, her giggle subsided, and she began to think of the dreadful story she had heard of her having showed Mrs. Flemming, through a glaß of fair water, the apparition of her husband with his face half masked with blood, the day before his murder by the watchmen in John's-lane. When, therefore, this woman of Endor called for water and glasses, and told Mrs. Mack that she must leave them alone together, poor little empty Mrs. Nutter lost heart, and began to feel very queer, and to wish herself well out of the affair; and, indeed, was almost ready to take to her heels and leave the two ladies in possession of the house, but she had not decision for this.

"And mayn't Mrs. Mack stay in the room with us?" she asked, following that good lady's retreating figure with an imploring look.

"By no means."

This was addressed sternly to Mrs. Mack herself, who, followed by poor Mrs. Nutter's eyes, moved fatly and meekly out of the room.

She was not without her fair share of curiosity, but on the whole, was relieved and very willing to go. She had only seen Mary Matchwell take from her pocket and uncase a small oval-shaped steel mirror, which seemed to have the property

of magnifying objects; for she saw her cadaverous fingers reflected in it to fully double their natural size, and she had half filled a glass with water, and peered through it askew, holding it toward the light.

Well, the door was shut, and an interval of five minutes elapsed; and all of a sudden two horrible screams in quick succession rang through the house.

Betty, the maid, and Mrs. Mack were in the small room on the other side of the hall, and stared in terror on one another. The old lady, holding Betty by the wrist, whispered a benediction; and Betty crying—"Oh! my dear, what's happened the poor mistress?" crossed the hall in a second, followed by Mrs. Mack. And they heard the door unlocked on the inside as they reached it.

In they came, scarce knowing how, and found poor little Mrs. Nutter flat upon the floor, in a swoon, her white face and the front of her dress drenched with water.

"You've a scent bottle, Mrs. Macnamara—let her smell to it," said the grim woman in black, coldly, but with a scarcely perceptible gleam of triumph, as she glanced on the horrified faces of the women.

Well, it was a long fainting-fit; but she did come out of it. And when her bewildered gaze at last settled upon Mrs. Matchwell, who was

standing darkly and motionless between the windows, she uttered another loud and horrible cry, and clung with her arms round Mrs. Mack's neck, and screamed—

"Oh! Mrs Mack, *there* she is—*there* she is—*there* she is."

And she screamed so fearfully and seemed in such an extremity of terror, that Mary Matchwell, in her sables, glided, with a strange sneer on her pale face, out of the room, across the hall, and into the little parlour on the other side, like an evil spirit whose mission was half accomplished, and who departed from her for a season.

"She's here—she's here!" screamed poor little Mrs. Nutter.

"No, dear, no—she's not—she's gone, my dear—indeed, she's gone," replied Mrs. Mack, herself very much appalled.

"Oh! is she gone—is she—is she gone?" cried Mrs. Nutter, staring all round the room, like a child after a frightful dream.

"She's gone, ma'am, dear—she isn't here—by this crass, she's gone!" said Betty, assisting Mrs. Mack, and equally frightened and incensed.

"Oh! oh! Betty, where is he gone? Oh! Mrs. Mack—oh! no—no—never! It can't be—it couldn't. It *is* not he—he never did it."

"I declare to you, ma'am, she's not right in her head!" cried poor Betty, at her wits' ends.

"There—*there* now, Sally, darling — *there*,"

said frightened Mrs. Mack, patting her on the back.

"There—there—there—I see him," she cried again. "Oh! Charley, Charley, sure—sure I didn't see it aright—it was not real."

"There now, don't be frettin' yourself, ma'am dear," said Betty.

But Mrs. Mack glanced over her shoulder in the direction in which Mrs. Nutter was looking, and with a sort of shock, not knowing whether it was a bodily presence or a devilish simulacrum raised by the incantations of Mary Matchwell, she beheld the dark features and white eye-balls of Nutter himself looking full on them from the open door.

"Sally—what ails you, sweetheart?" said he, coming close up to her with two swift steps.

"Oh! Charley, 'twas a dream—nothing else—a bad dream, Charley. Oh! say it's a dream," cried the poor terrified little woman. "Oh! she's coming—she's coming!" she cried again, with an appalling scream.

"*Who*—what's the matter?" cried Nutter, looking in the direction of his poor wife's gaze in black wrath and bewilderment, and beholding the weird woman who had followed him into the room. As he gazed on that pale, wicked face and sable shape, the same sort of spell which she exercised upon Mrs. Mack and poor Mrs. Nutter seemed in a few seconds to steal over Nutter himself, and fix



him in the place where he stood. His mahogany face bleached to sickly boxwood, and his eyes looked like pale balls of stone about to leap from their sockets.

After a few seconds, however, with a sort of a gasp, like a man awaking from a frightful sleep, he said—

“Betty, take the mistress to her room;” and to his wife, “go sweetheart. Mrs. Macnamara, this must be explained,” he added; and taking her by the hand, he led her in silence to the hall-door, and signed to the driver.

“Oh! thank you, Mr. Nutter,” she stammered; “but the coach is not mine; it came with that lady who’s with Mrs. Nutter.”

He had up to this moved with her like a somnambulist.

“Ay, that lady; and who the devil is she?” and he seized her arm with a sudden grasp, that made her wince.

“Oh! that lady!” faltered Mrs. Mack—“she’s—I believe—she’s Mrs. Matchwell—the—the lady that advertises her abilities.”

“Hey! I know—the fortune-teller, and go-between,—her!”

She was glad he asked her no more questions, but let her go, and stood in a livid meditation, forgetting to bid her good evening. She did not wait, however, for his courteous dismissal, but hurried away towards Chapelizod. The only

thing connected with the last half-hour's events that seemed quite clear and real to the scared lady was the danger of being overtaken by that terrible woman, and a dreadful sense of her own share as an accessory in the untold mischief that had befallen poor Mrs. Nutter.

In the midst of her horrors and agitation Mrs. Mack's curiosity was not altogether stunned. She wondered vaguely, as she pattered along, with what dreadful exhibition of her infernal skill Mary Matchwell had disordered the senses of poor little Mrs. Nutter—had she called up a red-eyed, sooty raven to her shoulder—as old Miss Alice Lee (when she last had a dish of tea with her) told her she had once done before—and made the ominous bird speak the doom of poor Mrs. Nutter from that perch? or had she raised the foul fiend in bodily shape, or showed her Nutter's dead face through the water?

With these images flitting before her brain, she hurried on at her best pace, fancying every moment that she heard the rumble of the accursed coach behind her, and longing to see the friendly uniform of the Royal Irish Artillery, and the familiar house-fronts of the cheery little street, and, above all, to hide herself securely among her own household gods.

When Nutter returned to the parlour his wife had not yet left it.

"I'll attend here, go you upstairs," said Nutter.

He spoke strangely, and looked odd, and altogether seemed strung up to a high pitch.

Out went Betty, seeing it was no good dawdling; for her master was resolute and formidable. The room, like others in old-fashioned houses with thick walls, had a double door. He shut the one with a stern slam, and then the other; and though the honest maid loitered in the hall, and, indeed, placed her ear very near the door, she was not much the wiser.

There was some imperfectly heard talk in the parlour, and cries, and sobs, and more talking. Then before Betty was aware, the door suddenly opened, and out came Mary Matchwell, with gleaming eyes, and a pale laugh of spite and victory, and threw a look, as she passed, upon the maid that frightened her, and so vanished into her coach.

Nutter disengaged himself from poor Mrs. Nutter's arms, in which he was nearly throttled, while she sobbed and shrieked—

“Oh! Charley, dear—dearest Charley—Charley, darling—isn't it frightful?” and so on.

“Betty, take care of her,” was all he said, and that sternly, like a man quietly desperate, but with a dismal fury in his face.

He went into the little room on the other side of the now darkening hall, and shut the door, and locked it inside. It was partly because he did not choose to talk just now any more with

his blubbing and shrieking wife. He was a very kind husband, in his way, but a most incapable nurse, especially in a case of hysterics.

He came out with a desk in his hands.

"Moggy," he said, in a low tone, seeing his other servant-woman in the dusk crossing at the foot of the stairs, "here, take this desk, leave it in our bedroom—'tis for the mistress; tell her so by-and-bye."

The wench carried it up; but poor Mrs. Nutter was in no condition to comprehend anything, and was talking quite wildly, and seemed to be growing worse rather than better.

Nutter stood alone in the hall, with his back to the door from which he had just emerged, his hands in his pockets, and the same dreary and wicked shadow over his face.

"So that——Sturk will carry his point after all," he muttered.

On the hall wainscot just opposite hung his horse-pistols; and when he saw them, and that wasn't for a while—for though he was looking straight at them, he was staring, really, quite through the dingy wooden panel at quite other objects three hundred miles away—when he *did* see them, I say, he growled in the same tone—

"I wish one of those bullets was through my head, so t'other was through his."

And he cursed him with laconic intensity. Then Nutter slapped his pockets, like a man feeling if

his keys and other portable chattels are all right before he leaves his home. But his countenance was that of one whose mind is absent and wandering. And he looked down on the ground, as it seemed in profound and troubled abstraction; and, after a while, he looked up again, and again glared fiercely on the cold pistols that hung before him—ready for anything. And he took down one with a snatch and weighed it in his hand, and fell to thinking again; and, as he did, kept opening and shutting the pan with a snap, and so for a long time, and thinking deeply to the tune of that castanet, and at last he roused himself, who knows from what dreams, and hung up the weapon again by its fellow, and looked about him.

The hall-door lay open, as Mary Matchwell had left it, Nutter stood on the door-step, where he could hear faintly, from above stairs, the cries and wails of poor, hysterical Mrs. Nutter. He remained there a good while, during which, unperceived by him, Dr. Toole's pestle-and-mortar-boy, who had entered by the back-way, had taken a seat in the hall. He was waiting for an empty draught-bottle, in exchange for a replenished flask of the same agreeable beverage, which he had just delivered; for physic was one of poor Mrs. Nutter's weaknesses, though, happily, she did not swallow half what came home for her.

When Nutter turned round, the boy—a sharp,

tattling vagabond—he knew him well, was reading a printed card he had picked up from the floor, with the impress of Nutter's hob-nailed tread upon it. It was endorsed upon the back, "For Mrs. Macnamara, with the humble duty of her obedient servant, M. M."

"What's that, sirrah?" shouted Nutter.

"For Mrs. Nutter, I think, sir," said the urchin, jumping up with a start.

"Mrs. Nutter?" repeated he—"No—Mrs. Mac—Macnamara," and he thrust it into his surtout pocket. "And what brings you here sirrah?" he added savagely; for he thought everybody was spying after him now, and, as I said, he knew him for a tattling young dog—he had taken the infection from his master, who had trained him.

"Here, woman," he cried to Moggy, who was passing again, "give that pimping rascal his —— answer; and see, sirrah, if I find you sneaking about the place again, I'll lay that whip across your back."

Nutter went into the small room again.

"An' how are ye, Jemmie—how's every inch iv you?" inquired Moggy of the boy, when his agitation was a little blown over.

"I'm elegant, thank ye," he answered; "an' what's the matther wid ye all. I cum through the kitchen, and seen no one."

"Och? didn't you hear? The poor mistress—she's as bad as bad can be." And then began a

whispered confidence, broken short by Nutter's again emerging, with the leather belt he wore at night on, and a short back-sword, called a *couteau de chasse*, therein, and a heavy walking-cane in his hand.

"Get tea for me, wench, in half an hour," said he, this time quite quietly, though still sternly, and without seeming to observe the quaking boy, who, at first sight, referred these martial preparations to a resolution to do execution upon him forthwith; "you'll find me in the garden when it's ready."

And he strode out, and pushing open the wicket door in the thick garden hedge, and, with his cane shouldered, walked with a quick, resolute step down towards the pretty walk by the river, with the thick privet hedge and the row of old pear trees by it. And that was the last that was heard or seen of Mr. Nutter for some time.

## CHAPTER XV.

## SWANS ON THE WATER.

AT about half-past six that evening, Puddock arrived at Captain Cluffe's lodgings, and for the first time the minstrels rehearsed their lovelorn and passionate ditties. They were drest "all in their best," under that outer covering, which partly for mystery, and partly for bodily comfort—the wind, after the heavy rains of the last week, having come round to the east—these prudent troubadours wore.

Though they hardly glanced at the topic to one another, each had his delightful anticipations of the chances of the evening. Puddock did not value Dangerfield a rush, and Cluffe's mind was pretty easy upon that point, from the moment his proposal for Gertrude Chatterworth had taken wind.

Only for that cursed shower the other night, that made it incumbent on Cluffe, who had had two or three sharp little visits of his patrimonial gout, and no notion of dying for love, to get to his quarters as quickly as might be—he had no doubt that the last stave of their first duet rising from the meadow of Belmont, with that charming



roulade—devised by Puddock, and the pathetic twang-twang of his romantic instrument, would have been answered by the opening of the drawing-room window, and Aunt Beeky's imperious summons to the serenaders to declare themselves, and come in and partake of supper!

The only thing that at all puzzled him, unpleasantly connected with that unsuccessful little freak of musical love-making, was the fellow they saw getting away from under the open window—the very same at which Lilius Walsingham had unintentionally surprised her friend Gertrude. He had a surtout on, with the cape cut exactly after the fashion of Dangerfield, and a three-cocked hat with very pinched corners, in the French style, which identical hat Cluffe was ready to swear he saw upon Dangerfield's head very early one morning, as he accidentally espied him viewing his peas and tulips in the little garden of the Brass Castle, by the river side.

'Twas fixed, in fact, in Cluffe's mind that Dangerfield was the man; and what the plague need had a declared lover of any such clandestine manœuvres. Was it possible that the old scoundrel was, after all, directing his night visits differently, and keeping the Aunt in play, as a reserve, in the event of the failure of his suit to the niece. Plans as gross, he knew, had succeeded; old women were so devilish easily won, and loved money, too, so well sometimes.

These sly fellows agreed that they must not go to Belmont by Chapelizod-bridge, which would lead them through the town; in front of the barrack, and under the very sign-board of the Phoenix. No, they would go by the Knockmaroon-road, cross the river by the ferry, and unperceived and unsuspected, enter the grounds of Belmont on the further side.

So away went the amorous musicians, favoured by the darkness, and talking in an undertone, and thinking more than they talked, while little Puddock, from under his cloak, scratched a faint little arpeggio and a chord, ever and anon, upon "the inthtrument."

When they reached the ferry, the boat was tied at the near side, but deuce a ferryman could they see. So they began to shout and hallo, singly, and together, until Cluffe, in much ire and disgust, exclaimed—

"Curse the sot—drunk in some whiskey-shop—the blackguard! That is the way such scoundrels throw away their chances, and help to fill the high roads with beggars and thieves; curse him, I shan't have a note left if we go on bawling this way. I suppose we must go home again."

"Fiddle-thick!" exclaimed the magnanimous Puddock. "I pulled myself acroth little more than a year ago, and 'twath ath eathy ath—ath—any thing. Get in, an looth the rope when I tell you."

This boat was managed by means of a rope

stretched across the stream from bank to bank; seizing which, in both hands, the boatman, as he stood in his skiff, hauled it, as it seemed, with very moderate exertion across the river.

Cluffe chuckled as he thought how sold the rascally boatman would be, on returning, to find his bark gone over to the other side.

"Don't be uneathy about the poor fellow," said Puddock; "we'll come down in the morning and make him a present; and explain how it occurred."

"Explain *yourself*—poor fellow be hanged!" muttered Cluffe, as he took his seat, for he did not part with his silver lightly. "I say, Puddock, tell me when I'm to slip the rope."

The signal given, Cluffe let go, entertaining himself with a little jingle of Puddock's guitar, of which he had charge, and a verse or two of their last song; while the plump little Lieutenant, standing upright, midships in the boat, hauled away, though not quite so deftly as was desirable. Some two or three minutes had passed before they reached the middle of the stream, which was, as Puddock afterwards remarked, "gigantically thwollen;" and at this point they came to something very like a standstill.

"I say, Puddock, keep her head a little more up the stream, will you?" said Cluffe, thinking no evil, and only to show his nautical knowledge.

"It's easy to say keep her head up the stream," gasped Puddock, who was now labouring fear-

fully, and quite crimson in the face, tugging his words up with a desperate lisp, and too much out of breath to say more.

The shades of night and the roar of the waters prevented Cluffe's observing these omens aright.

"What the plague are you doing *now*?" cried Cluffe, arresting a decorative passage in the middle, and for the first time seriously uncomfortable, as the boat slowly spun round, bringing what Cluffe called her head—though head and tail were pretty much alike—toward the bank they had quitted.

"Curse you, Puddock, why—what are you going back for; you can't do it."

"Lend a hand," bawled Puddock, in extremity. "I say, help, seize the rope; I say, Cluffe, quick thir, my arms are breaking."

There was no great exaggeration in this—there seldom was in any thing Puddock said; and the turn of the boat had twisted his arms like the strands of a rope.

"Hold on, Puddock, curse you, I'm coming," roared Cluffe, quite alive to the situation. "If you let go, I'm *diddled* but I'll shoot you."

"Catch the rope, I thay, thir, or 'tith all over!"

Cluffe, who had only known that he was slowly spinning round, and that Puddock was going to commit him to the waves, made a vehement exertion to catch the rope, but it was out of reach, and the boat rocked so suddenly from his rising, that he sat down by mistake again, with a violent

plump that made his teeth gnash, in his own place; and the shock and his alarm stimulated his anger.

"Hold on, sir; hold on, you little devil, I say, one minute, here—hold—hollo!"

While Cluffe was shouting these words, and scrambling forward, Puddock was crying,

"Curth it, Cluffe, quick—oh! hang it, I can't thtand it—bleth my *thoul*!"

And Puddock let go, and the boat and its precious freightage, with a horrid whisk and a sweep, commenced its seaward career in the dark.

"Take the oars, sir, hang you!" cried Cluffe.

"There are no oarth," replied Puddock, solemnly.

"Or the helm."

"There'th no helm."

"And what the devil, sir?" and a splash of cold water soused the silken calves of Cluffe at this moment.

"Heugh! eugh!—and what the devil *will* you do, sir? you don't want to drown me, I suppose," roared Cluffe, holding hard by the gunwale.

"*You* can thwim, Cluffe; jump in, and don't mind me," said little Puddock, sublimely.

Cluffe, who was a bit of a boaster, had bragged one evening at mess of his swimming, which he said was famous in his school days; 'twas a lie, but Puddock believed it implicitly.

"Thank you!" roared Cluffe. "Swim, in-

deed!—buttoned up this way—and—and the gout too.”

“I say, Cluffe, save the guitar, if you can,” said Puddock.

- In reply, Cluffe cursed that instrument through his teeth with positive fury, and its owner; and, indeed, he was so incensed at this unfeeling request, that if he had known where it was, I think he would have gone nigh to smash it on Puddock’s head, or at least, like the “Minstrel Boy,” to tear its chords asunder; for Cluffe was hot, especially when he was frightened. But he forgot—though it was hanging at that moment by a pretty scarlet and gold ribbon about his neck.

“Guitar be *diddled*!” cried he; “’tis gone—where *we’re* going—to the bottom. What devil possessed you, sir, to drown us this way?”

Puddock sighed. They were passing at this moment the quiet banks of the pleasant meadow of Belmont, and the lights twinkled from the bow-window in the drawing-room. I don’t know whether Puddock saw them—Cluffe certainly did not.

“Hollo! hollo!—a rope!” cried Cluffe, who had hit upon this desperate expedient for raising the neighbourhood. “A rope—a rope—hollo! hollo!—a ro-o-o-pe!”

And Aunt Becky, who heard the wild whooping, mistook it for drunken fellows at their diversions, and delivered their sentiments in the drawing-room accordingly.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## SWANS IN THE WATER.

"WE'RE coming to something—what's that?" said Puddock, as a long row of black stakes presented themselves at some distance ahead, in the dusky moonlight, slanting across the stream.

"'Tis the salmon-weir!" roared Cluffe, with an oath that subsided into something like a sickening prayer.

It was only a fortnight before that a tipsy fellow had been found drowned in the net. Cluffe had lost his head much more than Puddock, though Cluffe had fought duels. But then, he really could not swim a bit, and he was so confoundedly buckled up,

"Sit to the right. Trim the boat, sir!" said little Puddock,

"Trim the devil!" bawled Cluffe, to whom this order of Puddock's, it must be owned a useless piece of martinetism in their situation, was specially disgusting; and he added, looking furiously ahead—"Tisn't the boat I'd trim, I promise you: you—you ridiculous murderer!"

Just then Puddock's end of the boat touched a stone, or a post, or something in the current, and

that in which Cluffe sat came wheeling swiftly round across the stream, and brought the gallant Captain so near the bank that, with a sudden jerk, he caught the end of a branch that stretched far over the water, and, spite of the confounded tightness of his toilet, with the energy of sheer terror, climbed a good way; but, reaching a point where the branch forked, he could get no further, though he tugged like a brick. But what was a fat fellow of fifty, laced, and buckled, and buttoned up, like poor Cluffe—with his legs higher up among the foliage than his head and body—to do, and with his right calf caught in the fork of a branch, so as to arrest all progress, and especially as the Captain was plainly too much for the branch, which was drooping toward the water, and emitting sounds premonitory of a smash.

With a long, screaming crash the branch stooped down to the water, and, so soon as the cold element made itself acquainted with those parts that reached it first, the gallant Captain, with a sort of sob, redoubled his efforts, and down came the faithless bough more and more perpendicularly, until his nicely got-up cue and bag, then his powdered head, and finally Captain Cluffe's handsome features, went under the surface. When this occurred he instantaneously disengaged his legs with a vague feeling that his last struggle above water was over.



His feet immediately touched the bottom; he stood erect, little above his middle, and quite out of the main current, within two or three steps of the bank, and he found himself—he scarcely knew how—on terra firma, impounded in a little flower-garden, with lilacs, and laburnums, and sweet-briars, and, through a window close at hand, whom should he see but Dangerfield, who was drying his hands in a towel; and, as Cluffe stood for a moment, letting the water pour down through his sleeves, he further saw him make some queer little arrangements, and eventually pour out and swallow a glass of brandy, and was tempted to invoke his aid on the spot; but some small incivilities which he had bestowed upon Dangerfield, when he thought he cherished designs upon Aunt Rebecca, forbade; and at that moment he spied the little wicket that opened upon the road, and Dangerfield stepped close up to the window, and cried sternly—"Who's there?" with his grim spectacles close to the window.

The boyish instinct of "hide and seek" took possession of Cluffe, and he glided forth from the precincts of the Brass Castle upon the high road, just as the little hall-door was pushed open, and he heard the harsh tones of Dangerfield challenging the gooseberry bushes and hollyhocks, and thrashing the evergreens with his cane.

Cluffe hied straight to his lodging, and ordered a sack posset. Worthy Mrs. Mason eyed him in

silent consternation, drenched and dishevelled, wild, and discharging water from every part of his clothing and decorations, as he presented himself without a hat, before her dim dipt candle in the hall.

"I'll take that—that vessel, if you please, sir, that's hanging about your neck," said the mild and affrighted lady, meaning Puddock's guitar, through the circular orifice of which, under the chords, the water with which it was filled occasionally splashed.

"Oh—eh?—the instrument?—confound it!" and rather sheepishly he got the gay red and gold ribbon over his lank head, and placing it in her hand without explanation, he said—"A warming-pan as quickly as may be, I beg, Mrs. Mason—and the posset, I do earnestly request. You see—I—I've been nearly drowned—and—and I can't answer for consequences if there be one minute's delay.

And up he went streaming, with Mrs. Mason's candle, to his bed-room, and dragged off his clinging garments, and dried his fat body like a man coming out of a bath, and roared for hot water for his feet, and bellowed for the posset and warming-pan, and rolled into his bed, and kept the whole house in motion.

And so soon as he had swallowed his cordial, and toasted his sheets, and with the aid of his man rolled himself in a great blanket, and clapped his

feet in a tub of hot water, and tumbled back again into his bed, he bethought him of Puddock, and ordered his man to take his compliments to Captain Burgh and Lieutenant Lillyman, the tenants of the nearest lodging-house, and to request either to come to him forthwith on a matter of life or death.

Lillyman was at home, and came.

"Puddock's drowned, my dear Lillyman, and I'm little better. The ferry boat broke away with us. Do go down to the Adjutant—they ought to raise the salmon nets—I'm very ill myself—very ill, indeed—else I'd have assisted; but you know *me*, Lillyman. Poor Puddock—'tis a sad business—but lose no time."

"And can't he swim?" asked Lillyman, aghast.

"Swim?—ay, like a stone, poor fellow! If he had only thrown himself out, and held by me, hang it, I'd have brought him to shore; but poor Puddock, he lost his head. And I—you see me here—don't forget to tell them the condition you found me in, and—and—now don't lose a moment."

So off went Lillyman to give the alarm at the barrack.

## CHAPTER XVII.

TREATING OF SOME CONFUSION, IN CONSEQUENCE, IN THE CLUB-ROOM OF THE PHOENIX AND ELSEWHERE, AND OF A HAT THAT WAS PICKED UP.

WHEN Cluffe sprang out of the boat, he was very near capsizing it and finishing Puddock off-hand, but she righted and shot away swiftly towards the very centre of the weir, over which, in a sheet of white foam, she swept, and continued her route toward Dublin—bottom upward—leaving little Puddock, however, safe and sound, clinging to a post, at top, and standing upon a rough sort of plank, which afforded a very unpleasant footing, by which the nets were visited from time to time.

“Hollo! are you safe, Cluffe?” cried the little Lieutenant, quite firm, though a little dizzy, on his narrow stand, with the sheets of foam whizzing under his feet; what had become of his musical companion he had not the faintest notion, and when he saw the boat hurled over near the sluice, and drive along the stream upside down, he nearly despaired.

But when the Captain’s military cloak, which he took for Cluffe himself, followed in the track

of the boat, whisking, sprawling, and tumbling, in what Puddock supposed to be the agonies of drowning, and went over the weir and disappeared from view, returning no answer to his screams of "Strike out, Cluffe! to your right, Cluffe. Hollo! to your right," he quite gave the Captain over.

"Surrendhur, you thievin' villian, or I'll put the contints iv this gun into yir carcass," shouted an awful voice from the right bank, and Puddock saw the outline of a gigantic marksman, preparing to fire into his corresponding flank.

"What do you mean, sir?" shouted Puddock, in extreme wrath and discomfort.

"Robbin' the nêts, you spalpeen; if you throw them salmon your hidin' undher your coat into the wather, be the tare-o'-war"——

"What thalmon, thir?" interrupted the Lieutenant. "Why, salmon's not in season, sir."

"None iv yer flummery, you schamin' scoundhrel; but jest come here and give yourself up, for so sure as you don't, or daar to stir an inch from that spot, I'll blow you to smithereens."

"Captain Cluffe is drowned, sir; and I'm Lieutenant Pudduck," rejoined the officer.

"Tare-an-ouns, an' is it yerself, Captain Puddock, that's in it?" cried the man. "I ax yer pardon; but I tuk you for one of thim vagabonds that's always plundherin' the fish. And who in the wide world, Captain jewel, id expeck to see you there, meditatin' in the middle of the river,

this time o' night ; an' I dunna how in the world you got there, at all, at all, for the planking is carried away hehind you since yistherday."

"Give an alarm, if you please, sir, this moment," urged Puddock. "Captain Cluffe has gone over this horrid weir, not a minute sinthe, and is I fear drowned."

"Dhrownded ! och ! bloody wars."

"Yes, sir, send some one this moment down the stream with a rope's end"—

"Hollo, Jemmy?" cried the man, and whistled through his crooked finger.

"Jemmy," said he to the boy who presented himself, "run down to Tom Garret, at the Mill-bridge, and tell him Captain Cluffe's dhrownded over the weir, and to take the boat-hook and rope—he's past the bridge by this time—ay is he at the King's House—an' if he brings home the corpse alive or dead, before an hour, Captain Puddock here will give him twenty guineas reward." So away went the boy.

"'Tis an unaisy way you're situated yourself, I'm afeard," observed the man.

"Have the goodness to say, sir, by what meanth if any, I can reach either bank of the river," lisped Puddock, with dignity.

"'Tis thrue for you, Captain, *that's* the chat—how the divil to get you alive out o' the position you're in. Can you swim?"

"No, thir."

"An' how the dickens did you get there?"

"I'd rather hear, sir, how I'm to get away, if you please," replied Puddock, loftily.

"Are you bare-legged?" shouted the man.

"No, thir," answered the little officer, rather shocked.

"An' you're there wid shoes on your feet?"

"Of course, sir," answered Puddock.

"Chuck them into the water this instant minute," roared the man.

"Why, there are valuable buckles, sir," remonstrated Puddock.

"Do you mane to say you'd rather be dhröwned in yer buckles than alive in yer stockin' feet?" he replied.

There were some cross expostulations, but eventually the fellow came out to Puddock. Perhaps the feat was not quite so perilous as he represented; but it certainly was not a pleasant one. Puddock had a rude and crazy sort of banister to cling to, and a rugged and slippery footing; but slowly and painfully, from one post to another, he made his way, and at last jumped on the solid, though not dry land, his life and his buckles safe.

"I'll give you a guinea in the morning, if you come to my quarterth. Mr. — thir, and, without wating a second, away he ran by the footpath, and across the bridge, right into the Phoenix, and burst into the club-room. There were assembled old Arthur Slowe, Tom Trimmer, from Luton,

old Trumble, Jack Collop, Colonel Strafford, and half-a-dozen more members, including some of the officers—O'Flaherty among the number, a little "flashy with liquor," as the phrase then was.

Puddock stood in the wide opened door, with the handle in his hand. He was dishevelled, soused with water, bespattered with mud, his round face very pale, and he fixed a wild stare on the company. The clatter of old Trimmer's backgammon, Slowe's disputations over the draft-board with Colonel Strafford, Collop's dissertation on the points of that screw of a horse he wanted to sell, and the general buzz of talk, were all almost instantaneously suspended on the appearance of this phantom, and Puddock exclaimed—

"Gentlemen, I'm thorry to tell you, Captain Cluffe ith, I fear, drowned!"

"Cluffe?" "Drowned?" "By Jupiter!" "You don't say so?" and a round of such ejaculations followed this announcement.

Allow me here to mention that I permit my people to swear by all the persons of the Roman mythology. There was a horrible profanity in the matter of oaths in those days, and I found that without changing the form of sentences, and sacrificing idioms, at times, I could not manage the matter satisfactorily otherwise.

"He went over the salmon weir—I saw him—Coyle's weir—headlong, poor fellow! I shouted



after him, but he could not answer, so pray let's be off, and"——

Here he recognised the Colonel with a low bow, and paused. The commanding officer instantaneously despatched Lieutenant Brady, who was there, to order out Sergeant Blakeney and his guard, and any six good swimmers in the regiment who might volunteer, with a reward of twenty guineas for whoever should bring in Cluffe alive, or ten guineas for his body; and the fat fellow all the time in his bed sipping sack posset!

So away ran Brady and a couple more of the young fellows at their best pace—no one spared himself on this errand—and little Puddock and another down to the bridge. It was preposterous.

By this time Lillyman was running like mad from Cluffe's lodgings along Martin's-row to the rescue of Puddock, who, at that moment with his friends and the aid of a long pole, was poking into a little floating tangle of withered leaves, turf, and rubbish, under the near arch of the bridge, in the belief that he was dealing with the mortal remains of Cluffe.

Lillyman overtook Toole at the corner of the street just in time to hear the scamper of the men, at double-quick, running down the sweep of the road to the bridge, and to hear the shouting that arose from the parade-ground by the river bank, from the men within the barrack precincts.

Toole joined Lillyman running.

"What the plague's this hubbub and hullo?" he cried.

"Puddock's drowned," panted Lillyman.

"Puddock! bless us! where?" puffed Toole.

"Hollo! you, sir—have they heard it—is he *drowned?*" cried Lillyman to the sentry outside the gate.

"Dhrownded? yes, sir," replied the man saluting.

"Is help gone?"

"Yes, sir, Lieutenant Brady, and Sergeant Blakeney, and nine men"

"Come along," cried Lillyman to Toole, and they started afresh. They heard the shouting by the river bank, and followed it by the path round the King's House, passing the Phœnix; and old Colonel Strafford, who was gouty, and no runner, standing with a stern and anxious visage at the door, along with old Trumble, Slowe, and Trimmer, and some of the maids and drawers in the in the rere, all in consternation.

"Bring me the news," screamed the Colonel, as they passed.

Lillyman was the better runner. Toole a good deal blown, but full of pluck, was labouring in the rere; Lillyman jumped over the stile, at the river path; and Toole saw an officer who resembled "poor Puddock," he thought, a good deal, cross the road, and follow in Lillyman's wake. The Doctor crossed the stile next, and made his best

gallop in rear of the plump officer, excited by the distant shouting, and full of horrible curiosity and good-nature.

Nearly opposite Inchicore they fished up an immense dead pig; and Toole said, to his amazement, he found Puddock crying over it, and calling it "my brother!" And this little scene added another very popular novelty to the Doctor's stock of convivial monologues.

Toole, who loved Puddock, hugged him heartily, and when he could get breath, shouted triumphantly after the more advanced party, "He's found, he's found!"

"Oh, thank Heaven!" cries little Puddock, with upturned eyes; "but is he really found?"

The Doctor almost thought that his perils had affected his intellect.

"Is he found—are *you* found?" cried the Doctor, resuming that great shake by both hands, which, in his momentary puzzle he had suspended.

"I—a—oh, dear!—I don't quite understand—is he lost? for mercy's sake is Cluffe lost?" implored Puddock.

"Lost in his bedclothes, maybe," cried Lillyman who had joined them.

"But he's not—he's *not* drowned?"

"Pish! drowned, indeed! unless he's drowned in the crock of hot water he's clapt his legs into."

"Where is he—where's Cluffe?"

"Hang it!—he's in bed, in his lodging, drinking hot punch, this half-hour."

"But are you certain?"

"Why, I saw him there myself," answered Lillyman, with an oath.

Poor little Puddock actually clasped his hands, looked up, and poured forth a hearty, almost hysterical, thanksgiving; for he had charged Cluffe's death altogether upon his own soul, and his relief was beyond expression.

In the meantime, the old gentlemen of the club were in a thrilling suspense, and that not altogether disagreeable state of horror in which men chew the cud of bitter fancy over other men's catastrophes. After about ten minutes in comes young Spaight.

"Well," says the Colonel, "is Cluffe safe, or—eh?"

"Cluffe's safe—only half drowned; but poor Puddock's lost."

"What!"

"Drowned, I'm afraid."

"Drowned! who says so?" repeats the Colonel.

"Cluffe—everybody."

"Why, there it is!" replied the Colonel, with a great oath, breaking through all his customary reserve and stiffness, and flinging his cocked-hat on the middle of the table, piteously, "A fellow that can't swim a yard *will* go by way of saving a great—a large gentleman, like Captain Cluffe,

from drowning, and he's pulled in himself; and so—bless my soul! what's to be done?"

So the Colonel broke into a lamentation, and a fury, and a wonder. "Cluffe and Puddock, the two steadiest officers in the corps! He had a devilish good mind to put Cluffe under arrest—the idiots—Puddock—he was devilish sorry. There wasn't a more honourable"—*et cetera*. In fact, a very angry and pathetic funeral oration, during which, accompanied by Doctor Toole, Lieutenant Puddock, in person, entered; and the Colonel stopped short with his eyes and mouth very wide open, and said the Colonel very sternly,

"I—I'm glad to see, sir, you're safe; and—and—I suppose, I shall hear now that *Cluffe's* drowned?" and he stamped the emphasis on the floor.

While all this was going on, some of the soldiers had actually got into Dublin. The tide was in, and the water very high at "Bloody Bridge." A hat, near the corner, was whisking round and round, always trying to get under the arch, and always, when on the point, twirled round again into the corner—an image of the "Flying Dutchman" and hope deferred. A watchman's crozier hooks the giddy thing. It is not a military hat; but they bring it back, and the captive lies in the guard-room—mentioned by me because we've seen that identical hat before.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOW CHARLES NUTTER'S TEA, PIPE, AND TOBACCO-BOX WERE ALL SET OUT FOR HIM IN THE SMALL PARLOUR AT THE MILLS ; AND HOW THAT NIGHT WAS PASSED IN THE HOUSE BY THE CHURCH-YARD.

MRS. NUTTER and Mrs. Sturk, the wives of the two men who most hated one another within the vicinage of Chapelized—natural enemies, holding aloof one from another, and each regarding the other in a puzzled way with a sort of apprehension and horror, as the familiar of that worst and most formidable of men—her husband—were this night stricken with a common fear and sorrow.

Darkness descended on the Mills and the river—a darkness deepened by the umbrageous trees that grouped about the old gray house in which poor Mrs. Nutter lay so ill at ease. Moggy carried the jingling tray of tea-things into Nutter's little study, and lighted his candles, and set the silver snuffers in the dish, and thought she heard him coming, and ran back again, and returned with the singing “tea-kitchen,” and then away again, for the thin buttered toast under its china cover, which our ancestors loved.

Then she listened—but 'twas a mistake—it was

the Widow Macan's step, who carried the ten pailfuls of water up from the river to fill the butt in the backyard every Tuesday and Friday, for a shilling a week, and "a cup o' tay with the girls in the kitchen."

Then Moggy lighted the fire with the stump of a candle, for the night was a little chill, and she set the small round table beside it, and laid her master's pipe and tobacco-box on it, and listened, and began to wonder what detained him.

So she went out into the sharp still air, and stood on the hall-door step, and listened again. Presently she heard the Widow Macan walking up from the garden with her last pail on her head, who stopped when she saw her, and set down the vessel upon the corner of the clumsy little balustrade by the door-stêp. So Moggy declared her uneasiness, which waxed greater when Mrs. Macan told her that "the masther, God bless him, wasn't in the garden."

She had seen him standing at the river's edge, while she passed and repassed. He did not move a finger, or seem to notice her, and was looking down into the water. When she came back the third or fourth time, he was gone.

At Moggy's command she went back into the garden, though she assured her, solemnly—" 'twas nansinse lookin' there"—and called Mr. Nutter, at first in a deferential and hesitating way; but emboldened and excited by the silence, for she began

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to feel unaccountably queer, in a louder and a louder key, till she was certain that he was neither in the garden nor in the orchard, nor anywhere near the house. And when she stopped, the silence seemed awful, and the darkness under the trees closed round her with a supernatural darkness, and the river at the foot of the walk seemed snorting some inarticulate story of horror. So she locked the garden door quickly, looking over her shoulder for she knew not what, and ran faster than she often did along the sombre walk up to the hall-door, and told her tale to Moggy, and begged to carry the pail in by the hall-door.

In they came, and Moggy shut the hall-door, and turned the key in it. Perhaps 'twas the state in which the poor lady lay 'up stairs that helped to make them excited and frightened. Betty was sitting by her bedside, and Toole had been there, and given her some opiate, I suppose, for she had dropped into a flushed snoring sleep, a horrid counterfeit of repose. But she had first • had two or three frightful fits, and all sorts of wild, screaming talk between. Perhaps it was the apparition of Mary Matchwell whose evil influence was so horribly attested by the dismal spectacle she had left behind her that predisposed them to panic; but assuredly each anticipated no good from the master's absence, and had a foreboding of something bad, of which they did not



• speak; but only disclosed it by looks, and listening, and long silences. The lights burning in Nutter's study invited them, and there the ladies seated themselves, and made their tea in the kitchen tea-pot, and clapt it on the hob, and listened for sounds from Mrs. Nutter's chamber, and for the step of her husband crossing the little court-yard; and they grew only more nervous from listening, and there came every now and then a little tapping at the window-pane. It was only, I think, a little sprig of the climbing rose that was nailed by the wall, nodding at every breath, and rapping, like unseen finger-tops, on the glass. But, as small things will, with such folk, under such circumstances, it frightened them confoundedly.

Then, on a sudden, there came a great yell from poor Mrs. Nutter's chamber, and they both stood up very pale. The Widow Macan, with the cup in her hand that she was "tossing" at the moment, and Moggy, all aghast, invoked a blessing under her breath, and they heard loud cries and sudden volleys of talk, and Biddy's voice, soothing the patient.

Poor Mrs. Nutter had started up, all on a sudden, from her narcotic doze with a hideous scream that had frightened the women down stairs. Then she cried—

"Where am I?" and "Oh, the witch—the witch!"

"Oh! no, ma'am, dear," replied Betty; "now, aisy, ma'am, darling."

"I'm going mad."

"No, ma'am, dear!—there now—sure 'tis poor Betty that's in it—don't be afeard, ma'am.

"Oh, Betty, hold me—don't go—I'm mad—am I mad?"

Then, in the midst of Betty's consolations, she broke into a flood of tears, and seemed in some sort relieved; and Betty gave her her drops again, and she began to mumble to herself, and so to doze.

At the end of another ten minutes, with a scream, she started up again.

"That's her step—where are you, Betty?" she shrieked; and when Betty ran to the bedside, she held her so hard that the maid was ready to cry out, leering all the time over her shoulder—"Where's Charles Nutter?—I saw him speaking to you."

Then the poor little woman grew quieter, and by her looks and moans, and the clasping of her hands, and her up-turned eyes, seemed to be praying; and when Betty stealthily opened the press to take out another candle, her poor mistress uttered another terrible scream, crying—

"You wretch! her head won't fit—you can't hide her;" and the poor woman jumped out of her bed, shrieking "Charles, Charles, Charles!"

Betty grew so nervous and frightened, that she

fairly bawled to her colleague, Moggy, and told her she would not stay in the room unless she sat up all night with her. So, together they kept watch and ward, and as the night wore on, Mrs. Nutter's slumbers grew more natural and less brief, and her paroxysms of waking terror less maniacal. Still she would waken, with a cry that thrilled them, from some frightful vision, and seem to hear or see nothing aright for a good while after, and mutter to the frightened maids—

“Listen to the knocking—ho!—breathing outside the door—bolt it, Betty—girls, say your prayers—’tis he,” or sometimes, “’tis she.”

And thus this heavy night wore over; and the wind, which began to rise as the hours passed, made sounds full of sad untranslatable meaning in the ears of the watchers.

Poor Mrs. Sturk meanwhile, in the House by the Church-yard, sat listening and wondering, and plying her knitting-needles in the drawing-room. When the hour of her Barney's expected return had passed some time, she sent down to the barrack, and then to the Club, and then on to the King's House, with her service to Mrs. Strafford to inquire after her spouse. But her first and her second round of inquiries, despatched at the latest minute at which she was likely to find any body out of bed to answer them, were altogether fruitless. And the lights went out in one house after another, and the Phoenix shut its doors, and her

own servants were for hours gone to bed; and the little town of Chapelizod was buried in the silence of universal slumber. And poor Mrs. Sturk still sat in her drawing-room, more and more agitated and frightened.

But her missing soldier did not turn up, and Leonora sat and listened hour after hour. No sound of return—not even the solemn clank and fiery snort of the fiend-horse under her window, or the “ho-lo, ho-la—my life, my love!” of the phantom rider, cheated her with a momentary hope.

Poor Mrs. Sturk! She raised the window a few inches, that she might the better hear the first distant ring of his coming on the road. She forgot he had not his horse that night, and was but a pedestrian. But somehow the night-breeze through the aperture made a wolfish howling and sobbing, that sounded faint and far away, and had a hateful character of mingled despair and banter in it.

She said every now and then aloud, to reassure herself—“what a noise the wind makes to be sure!” and after a while she opened the window wider. But her candle flared, and the flame tossed wildly about, and the perplexed lady feared it might go out absolutely. So she shut down the window altogether; for she could not bear the ill-omened baying any longer.

So it grew to be past two o'clock, and she was

afraid that Barney would be very angry with her for sitting up, should he return.

She went to bed, therefore, where she lay only more feverish—listening, and conjecturing, and painting frightful pictures, till she heard the crow of the early village cock, and the caw of the jackdaw wheeling close to the eaves as he took wing in the gray of the morning, to show her that the business of a new day had commenced; and yet Barney had not returned.

Not long after seven o'clock, Dr. Toole, with Juno, Cæsar, Dido, and Sneak at his heels, paid his half-friendly, half-professional visit at the Mills.

Poor little Mrs. Nutter was much better—quiet for her was everything, backed up, of course, with a little physic; and having comforted her, as well as he was able, he had a little talk with Moggy in the hall, and all about Nutter's disappearance, and how Mrs. Macan saw him standing by the river's brink, and that was the last anyone near the house had seen of him; and a thought flashed upon Toole, and he was very near coming out with it, but checked himself, and only said—

“What hat had he on?”

So she told him.

“And was his name writ in it, or how was it marked?”

“Two big letters—a C and an N.”

“I see; and do you remember any other mark you'd know it by?”

"Well, yes; I stitched the lining, only last month, with red silk, and that's how I remember the letters."

"I know; and are you sure it was that hat he had on?"

"Certain sure—why, there's all the rest;" and she conned them over, as they hung on their pegs on the rack before them.

"Now, don't let the mistress be downhearted—keep her up, Moggy, do you mind. I told her the master was with Lord Castlemallard since yesterday evening, on business, and don't you say any thing else; keep her quiet, do you mind, and humour her."

And away went Toole, at a swift pace, to the town again, and entered the barrack, and asked to see the Adjutant, and then to look at the hat the corporal had fished up by "Bloody Bridge;" and, by Jupiter! his heart gave a couple of great bounces, and he felt himself grow pale—they were the identical capitals, C N, and the clumsy red silk stitching in the lining.

Toole was off forthwith, and had a fellow dragging the river before three-quarters of an hour.

Dr. Walsingham, returning from an early ride to Island Bridge, saw this artist at work, with his ropes and great hooks, at the other side of the river; and being a man of inquiring mind, and never having witnessed the process before, he

cried out to him, after some moments lost in contemplation and conjecture—

“My good man, what are you fishing for?”

“A land-agent,” answered Isaac Walton.

“A land-agent,” repeated the Rector, mis-doubting his ears.

The saturnine angler made no answer.

“And has a gentleman been drowned here?” he persisted.

The man only looked at him across the stream, and nodded.

“Eh! and his name, pray?”

“Old Nutter, of the Mills,” he replied.

The rector made a woful ejaculation, and stared at the careless operator, who had a pipe in his mouth the while, which made him averse from conversation. He would have liked to ask him more questions, but he was near the village, and refrained himself; and he met Toole at the corner of the bridge who, leaning on the shoulder of the rector's horse, gave him the sad story in full.

## CHAPTER XIX.

CONCERNING A ROULEAU OF GUINEAS AND THE CRACK OF  
A PISTOL.

DANGERFIELD went up the river that morning with his rod and net, and his piscatory fidus Achates, Irons, at his elbow. It was a nice gray sky, but the clerk was unusually silent even for him; and the sardonic piscator del onda appeared inscrutably amused as he looked steadily upon the running waters. Once or twice the spectacles turned full upon the clerk, over Dangerfield's shoulder, with a cynical light, as if he were on the point of making one of his ironical jokes; but he turned back again with a little whisk, the jest untold, whatever it was, to the ripple and the fly, and the coy gray troutlings.

At last, Dangerfield said over his shoulder, with the same amused look, "Do you remember Charles Archer?"

Irons turned pale, and looked down embarrassed as it seemed, and began plucking at a tangled piece of tackle, without making any answer.

"Hey? Irons," persisted Dangerfield, who was not going to let him off.

"Yes, I do," answered the man, surlily; "I re-



member him right well; but I'd rather not, *and* I won't speak of him, that's all."

"Well, Charles Archer's *here*, we've seen him, haven't we? and just the devil he always was," said Dangerfield with a deliberate chuckle of infinite relish, and evidently enjoying the clerk's embarrassment as he eyed him through his spectacles obliquely.

"He has seen *you*, too, he says; and thinks *you* have seen *him*, hey?" and Dangerfield chuckled more and more knowingly, and watched his shiftings and sulkings with a pleasant grin, as he teased and quizzed him in his own enigmatical way.

"Well, supposing I *did* see him," said Irons, looking up, returning Dangerfield's comic glance with a bold and lowering stare; "and supposing *he* saw *me*, so long as we've no business one of another, and never talks like, nor seems to remember—I think 't isn't, no ways, no one's business—that's what I say."

"True, Irons, very true; you, I, and Sturk—the Doctor I mean—are cool fellows, and don't want for nerve; but I think, don't you? we're afraid of Charles Archer, for all that."

"Fear or no fear, I don't want no talk *to* him nor *of* him, no ways," replied the clerk, grimly, and looking as black as a thunder-cloud.

"Nor I neither, but you know he's *here*, and what a devil he is; and we can't help it," replied Dangerfield, very much tickled.

The clerk only looked through his nearly closed eyes, and with the same pale and surly aspect toward the point to which Dangerfield's casting line had floated, and observed,

"You'll lose them flies, sir."

"Hey!" said Dangerfield; and made another cast further into the stream.

"Whatever he may seem, and I think I know him pretty well," he continued, in the same sprightly way, "Charles Archer would dispose of each of us—you understand—without a scruple, precisely when and how best suited his convenience. Now Doctor Sturk has sent him a message, which I know will provoke him, when he gets it, for it sounds like a threat. If he reads it so, rely on't, he'll lay Sturk on his back, one way or another, and I'm sorry for him, for I wished him well; but if he will play at brag with the *devil*, I can't help him."

"I'm a man that holds his tongue; I'm known for't; I never talks none, even in my liquor. I'm a peaceable man, and no bully, and only wants to live quiet," said Irons, in a hurry.

"A disciple of *my* school, you're right, Irons, that's my way; I never *name* Charles except to the two or three who meet him, and then only when I can't help it, just as you do; fellows of that kidney I always take quietly, and I've prospered. Sturk would do well to reconsider his message. Were I in his shoes, I would not eat an

egg or a gooseberry, or drink a glass of fair water from that stream, while he was in the country, for fear of *poison* ! curse him ; and to think of Sturk expecting to meet him, and walk with him, after such a message, together, as you and I do here. Do you see that tree ?”

It was a stout poplar, just a yard away from Irons’ shoulder ; and as Dangerfield pronounced the word “tree,” his hand rose, and the sharp report of a pocket-pistol half-deafened Irons’ ear.

“I say,” said Dangerfield, with a startling laugh, observing Irons wince, and speaking as the puff of smoke crossed his face, “he’d lodge a bullet in the cur’s heart, as suddenly as I’ve shot that tree ;” the bullet had hit the stem right in the centre, “and swear he was going to rob him.”

Irons eyed him with a livid squint, but answered nothing. I think he acquiesced in Dangerfield’s dreadful estimate of Charles Archer’s character.

But we must give the devil his due ; Charles can do a handsome thing sometimes. You shall judge. It seems he saw you, and you him—here, in this town, some months ago, and each knew the other, and you’ve seen him since, and done likewise ; but you said nothing, and he liked your philosophy, and hopes you’ll accept of this, which from its weight I take to be a little rouleau of guineas.”

During this speech Irons seemed both angry and frightened, and looked darkly enough before

him on the water; and his lips were moving, as if he was imperfectly muttering a running commentary upon it all the while.

When Dangerfield put the little roll in his hand, Irons looked suspicious and frightened, and balanced it in his palm, as if he had thoughts of chucking it from him, as though it were literally a satanic douceur. But it is hard to part with money, and Irons, though he still looked cowed and unhappy, put the money into his breeches' pocket, and he made a queer bow, and he said—

“You know, sir, I never asked a farthing.”

“Ay, so he says,” answered Dangerfield.

“And,” with an imprecation, Irons added, “I never expected to be a shilling the better of him.”

“He knows it;” and now you have the reason why I mentioned Charles Archer; and having placed that gold in your hand, I’ve done with him, and we shan’t have occasion, I hope, to name his name for a good while to come,” said Dangerfield.

Then came a long refreshing silence, while Dangerfield whipt the stream with his flies. He was not successful; but he did not change his flies. It did not seem to trouble him; indeed, mayhap he did not perceive it. And after fully twenty minutes thus unprofitably employed, he suddenly said, as if in continuation of his last sentence—

“And, respecting that money you’ll use caution;

a hundred guineas is not always so honestly come by. Your wife drinks—suppose a relative in England had left you that gold, by will, 'twould be best, not to let *her* know; but give it to Dr. Walsingham, secretly, to keep for you, telling him the reason. He'll undertake the trust and tell no one—*that's* your plan—mind ye."

Then came another long silence, and Dangerfield applied himself in earnest to catch some trout, and when he had accomplished half-a-dozen, he tired altogether of the sport, and followed by Irons, he sauntered homewards, where astounding news awaited him.

## CHAPTER XX.

RELATING AFTER WHAT FASHION DR. STURK CAME HOME.

As Dangerfield, having parted company with Irons at the corner of the bridge, was walking through the town, with his rod over his shoulder and his basket of troutlings by his side, his attention was arrested by a little knot of persons in close and earnest talk at the barrack-gate, nearly opposite Sturk's house.

He distinguished at a glance the tall grim figure of Oliver Lowe, of Lucan, the sternest and shrewdest magistrate who held the commission for the county of Dublin in those days, mounted on his iron-gray hunter, and holding the crupper with his right hand, as he leaned toward a ragged, shaggy little urchin, with naked shins, whom he was questioning as it seemed closely. Half-a-dozen gaping villagers stood round.

There was an indescribable something about the group which indicated horror and excitement. Dangerfield quickened his pace, and arrived just as the Adjutant rode out.

Saluting both as he advanced, Dangerfield asked—

“Nothing amiss, I hope, gentlemen?”

"The Surgeon here's been found murdered in the Park!" answered Lowe.

"Hey—*Sturk*?" said Dangerfield.

"Yes," said the Adjutant; "this boy here says he's found him in the Butcher's Wood."

"The Butcher's Wood!—why, what the plague brought him *there*?" exclaimed Dangerfield.

"'Tis his straight road from Dublin across the Park," observed the magistrate.

"Oh!—I thought 'twas the wood by Lord Mountjoy's," said Dangerfield; "and when did it happen?"

"Pooh!"—some time between yesterday afternoon and half an hour ago," answered Mr. Lowe.

"Nothing known?" said Dangerfield. "'Twill be a sad hearing over the way;" and he glared grimly with a little side-nod at the Doctor's house.

Then he fell, like the others, to questioning the boy. He could tell them but little—only the same story over and over. Coming out of town, with tea and tobacco, a pair of shoes, and a bottle of whiskey, for old Mrs. Tresham—in the thick of the Wood, among brambles, all at once he lighted on the body. He could not mistake Dr. Sturk; he wore his regimentals; there was blood about him; he did not touch him, nor go nearer than a musket's length to him, and being frightened at the sight in that lonely place he ran away and right down to the barrack, where he made his report.

Just then out came Sergeant Bligh, with his men—two of them carrying a bier with a mattress and cloaks thereupon. They formed, and accompanied by the Adjutant, at quick step marched through the town for the Park. Mr. Lowe accompanied them, and in the Park-lane they picked up the ubiquitous Doctor Toole, who joined the party.

Dangerfield walked a while beside the Adjutant's horse; and, said he—

“I've had as much walking as I can well manage this morning, and you don't want for hands, so I'll turn back when I've said just a word in your ear. You know, sir, funerals are expensive, and I happen to know that poor Sturk was rather pressed for money—in fact, 'twas only the day before yesterday I myself lent him a trifle. So will you, through whatever channel you think best, let poor Mrs. Sturk know that she may draw upon me for a hundred pounds, if she requires it.”

“Thank you, Mr. Dangerfield; I certainly shall.”

And so Dangerfield lifted his hat to the party and fell behind, and came to a stand still, watching them till they disappeared over the brow of the hill.

When he reached his little parlour in the Brass Castle luncheon was upon the table. But he had not much of an appetite, and stood at the window, looking upon the river with his hands in his



pockets, and a strange pallid smile over his face, mingling with the light of the silver spectacles.


"When Irons hears of this," he said, "he'll come to my estimate of Charles Archer, and conclude he has had a finger in that pretty pie; 'twill frighten him."

And somehow Dangerfield looked a little bit queer himself, and he drank off two small glasses—such as folks then used in Ireland—of Nantz; and setting down the glass, he mused—

"A queer battle life is; ha, ha! Sturk laid low—the wretched fool! Widow—yes; children—ay. Charles! Charles! if there be a reckoning after death, your score's an ugly one. I'm tired of playing my part in this weary game of defence. Irons and I remain with the secret between us. Glasscock had his fourth of it, and tasted death. Then we three had it; and Sturk goes next; and now I and Irons—Irons and I—which goes first?" And he fell to whistling slowly and dismally, with his hands in his breeches' pockets, looking vacantly through his spectacles on the ever running water, an emblem of the eternal change and monotony of life.

In the meantime the party, with Tim Brian, the bare-shanked urchin, still in a pale perspiration, for guide, marched on, all looking ahead, in suspense, and talking little.

On they marched, till they got into the bosky shadow of the close old whitethorn and brambles,



and there, in a lonely nook, the small birds hopping on the twigs above, sure enough, on his back, in his regimentals, lay the clay-coloured image of Sturk, some blood, nearly black now, at the corners of his mouth, and under his stern brows a streak of white eye-ball turned up to the sky.

There was a pool of blood under his pomatumed, powdered, and curled head, more under his right arm, which was slightly extended, with the open hand thrown palm upwards, as if appealing to heaven.

Toole examined him.

"No pulse, by Jove! Quiet there; don't stir!" Then he clapt his ear on Sturk's white Marseilles vest.

"Hush!" and a long pause. Then Toole rose erect, but still on his knees, "*Will* you be quiet there? I think there's some little action still; only don't talk, or shift your feet; and just—just, do be quiet?"

Then Toole rose to his knees again, with a side glance fixed on the face of Sturk, with a puzzled and alarmed look. He evidently did not well know what to make of it. Then he slipped his hand within his vest, and between his shirt and his skin.

"If he's dead, he's not long so. There's warmth here. And see, get me a pinch or two of that thistle-down, d'ye see?"

And with the help of this improvised test he

proceeded to try whether he was still breathing. But there was a little air stirring, and they could not manage it.

"Well!" said Toole, standing this time quite erect, "I—I think there's life there still. And now, boys, d'ye see? lift him very carefully, d'ye mind? Gently, very gently, for, I tell you, if this hæmorrhage begins again, he'll not last twenty seconds."

So on a cloak they lifted him softly and deftly to the bier, and laid covering over him; and having received Toole's last injunctions, and especially a direction to Mrs. Sturk to place him in a well-warmed bed, and introduce a few spoonfuls of warm port wine negus into his mouth, and if he swallowed, to continue to administer it from time to time, Sergeant Bligh and his men commenced their funereal march toward Sturk's house.



"And now, Mr. Adjutant," said Lowe, "had not we best examine the ground, and make a search for a anything that may lead to a conviction?"

Well, a ticket was found trod into the bloody mud, scarcely legible, and Sturk's cocked hat, the leaf and crown cut through with a blow of some blunt instrument. His sword they had found by his side not drawn.

"See! here's a foot-print, too," said Lowe; "don't move!"

It was remarkable. They pinned together the

the backs of two letters, and Toole, with his surgical scissors, cut the pattern to fit exactly into the impression; and he and Lowe, with great care, pencilled in the well-defined marks of the great hob-nails, and a sort of seam or scar across the heel.

"Twas pretty much after this fashion. It was in a slight dip in the ground where the soil continued soft. They found it in two other places coming up to the fatal spot, from the direction of the Magazine.  And it was traceable on for some twenty yards more faintly; then, again, very distinctly, where—a sort of ditch interposing—a jump had been made, and here it turned down towards the Park wall and the Chapelizod-road, still, however, slanting in the Dublin direction. 

In the hollow by the Park wall it appeared again, distinctly; and here it was plain the transit of the wall had been made, for the traces of the mud were evident enough upon its surface, and the mortar at top was displaced, and a little tuft of grass in the mud, left by the clodded shoe-sole. Here the fellow had got over.

They followed, and, despairing of finding it upon the road, they diverged into the narrow slip of ground by the river bank, and just within the Park-gate, in a slight hollow, the clay of which was still impressible, they found the track again. It led close up to the river bank, and there the

villain seemed to have come to a stand still; for the sod, just for so much as a good sized sheet of letter-paper might cover, was trod and broken, as if at the water's edge he had stood for a while, and turned about and shifted his feet, like a fellow that is uneasy while he is stationary.

From this stand-point they failed to discover any receding foot-print; but close by it came a little horse track, covered with shingle, by which, in those days, the troops used to ride their horses to water. He might have stepped upon this, and following it, taken to the streets; or he might—and this was Lowe's theory—have swum the river at this point, and got into some of those ruffian haunts in the rear of Watling and St. James's streets. So Lowe, who, with a thief or a murderer in the wind, had the soul of a Nimrod, rode round to the opposite bank, first telling Toole, who did not care to press his services at Sturk's house, uninvited, that he would send out the great Doctor Pell to examine the patient, or the body, as the case might turn out.

By this time they were carrying Doctor Sturk—that gaudy and dismal image—up his own staircase—his pale wife sobbing and shivering on the landing, among whispered ejaculations from the maids, and the speechless wonder of the awe-stricken children, staring through the banisters—to lay him in the bed where at last he is to lie without dreaming.

## CHAPTER XXI.

IN WHICH MISS MAGNOLIA MACNAMARA AND DR. TOOLE, IN DIFFERENT SCENES, PROVE THEMSELVES GOOD SAMARITANS; AND THE GREAT DOCTOR PELL MOUNTS THE STAIRS OF THE HOUSE BY THE CHURCH-YARD.

So pulse or no pulse, dead or alive, they got Sturk into his bed.

Poor, cowed, quiet little Mrs. Sturk, went quite wild at the bedside.

"Oh! my Barney—my Barney—my noble Barney," she kept crying.

"He's gone—he'll never speak again. Do you think he hears? Oh, Barney, my darling—Barney, it's your own poor little Letty—oh—Barney, darling, don't you hear. It's your own poor, foolish Letty."

But it was the same stern face, and ears of stone. There was no answer and no sign.

And she sent a pitiful entreaty to Doctor Toole, who came very good-naturedly—and indeed he was prowling about the door-way of his domicile in expectation of the summons. And he shook her very cordially by the hand, and quite "filled-up," at her wobegone appeal, and told her she must not despair yet.

And this time he pronounced most positively that Sturk was still living.

"Yes, my dear madam, so sure as you and I are. There's no mistaking."

And as the warmth of the bed began to tell, the signs of life showed themselves more and more unequivocally. But Toole knew that his patient was in a state of coma, from which he had no hope of his emerging.

So poor little Mrs. Sturk—as white as the plaster on the wall—who kept her imploring eyes fixed on the Doctor's ruddy countenance, during his moments of deliberation, burst out into a flood of tears, and thanksgivings, and benedictions.

"He'll recover—something tells me he'll recover. Oh! my Barney—darling—you will—you will."

"While there's life—you know—my dear ma'am," said Toole, doing his best. "But then—you see—he's been very badly abused about the head; and the brain—you know—is the great centre—the—the—but, as I said, while there's life, there's hope."

"And he's so strong—he shakes off an illness so easily; he has such courage."

"So much the better, ma'am."

"And I can't but think, as he did not die outright, and has shown such wonderful endurance. Oh! my darling, he'll get on."

“ Well, well, ma'am there certainly have been wonderful recoveries.

“ And he's so much better already, you see, and I know so well how he gets through an illness, 'tis wonderful, and he certainly is mightily improved since we got him to bed. Why, I can *see* him breathe now, and you know it *must* be a good sign; and then there's a merciful God over us—and all the poor little children—what would become of us?” And then she wiped her eyes quickly. The promise, you know, of length of days—it often comforted me before—to those that honour father and mother; and I believe there never was so good a son. Oh! my noble Barney, never: 'tis my want of reliance and trust in the Almighty's goodness.”

And so, holding Toole by the cuff of his coat, and looking piteously into his face as they stood together in the door way, the poor little woman argued thus with inexorable death.

Fools, and blind! when amidst our agonies of supplication the blow descends, our faith in prayer is staggered, as if it reached not the ear of the All-wise, and moved not His sublime compassion. Are we quite sure that we comprehend the awful and far-sighted game that is beign played for us and others so well that we can sit by and safely dictate its moves.

How will Messrs. Morphy or Staunton, on whose calculations I will suppose, you have staked £100, brook your insane solicitations to spare this pawn



or withdraw that knight from prise, on the board which is but the toy type of that dread field where all the powers of eternal intellect, the wisdom from above and the wisdom from beneath—the stupendous intelligence that made, and the stupendous sagacity that would undo us, are pitted one against the other in a death-combat, which admits of no reconciliation and no compromise.

About poor Mrs. Nutter's illness, and the causes of it, various stories were current in Chapelizod. Some had heard it was a Blackamore witch who had evoked the foul fiend in bodily shape from the parlour cupboard, and that he had with his cloven foot kicked her and Sally Nutter round the apartment until their screams brought in Charles Nutter, who was smoking in the garden; and that on entering, he would have fared as badly as the rest, had he not had presence of mind to pounce at once upon the great family Bible that lay on the window-sill, with which he belaboured the infernal intruder to a purpose. Others reported 'twas the ghost of old Philip Nutter, who rose through the floor, and talked I know not what awful rhotomantade. These were the confabulations of the tap-room and the kitchen; but the speculations and rumours current over the card-table and claret-glasses were hardly more congruous or intelligible. In fact, nobody knew well what to make of it. Nutter certainly had disappeared, and there was an uneasy feeling about him. The

sinister terms on which he and Sturk had stood were quite well known, and though nobody spoke out, every one knew pretty well what his neighbour was thinking of.


Our blooming friend, the handsome and stalworth Magnolia, having got a confidential hint from agitated Mrs. Mack, trudged up to the mills, in a fine frenzy, vowing vengeance on Mary Matchwell, for she liked poor Sally Nutter well. And when, with all her roses in her cheeks, and her saucy black eyes flashing vain lightnings across the room in pursuit of the vanished woman in sable, the Amazon with black hair and slender waist comforted and pitied poor Sally, and anathematised her cowardly foe, it must be confessed she looked plaguey handsome, wicked, and good-natured.

"Mary Matchwell, indeed! *I'll* match her well, wait a while, you'll see if I don't. I'll pay her off yet, never mind, Sally, darling. Arrah! Don't be crying, child, do you hear me. *What's* that? *Charles?* Why, then, is it about Charles you're crying? Charles Nutter? Phiat! woman dear! don't you think he's come to an age to take care of himself? I'll hold you a crown he's in Dublin with the sheriff, going to cart that jade to bridewell. And why in the world didn't you send for *me*, when you wanted to discourse Mary Matchwell? Where was the good of my poor dear mother? Why, she's as soft as butter.

'Twas a devil like me you wanted, you poor little darling. Do you think I'd a let her frighten you this way—the vixin—I'd a kicked her through the window as soon as look at her. She saw with half an eye she could frighten you both, you poor things. Oh! ho! how I wish I was here. I'd a put her across my knee and—*no*—do you say? Pooh! you don't know me, you poor innocent little creature; and, do ye mind now, you must not be moping here. Sally Nutter, all alone, you'll just come down to us, and drink a cup of tea and play a round game, and hear the news; and look up now and give me a kiss, for I like you, Sally, you kind old girl.

And she gave her a hug, and a shake, and half-a-dozen kisses on each cheek, and laughed merrily, and scolded and kissed her again.

Little more than an hour after, up comes a little *billet* from the good-natured Magnolia, just to help poor little Sally Nutter out of the vapours, and vowing that no excuse should stand good, and that come she must, to tea and cards. "And, oh! what do you think?" it went on. "Such a bit a newse, I'm going to tell you, so prepare for a chock;" at this part poor Sally felt quite sick, but went on. "Doctor Sturk, that droav into town Yesterday, as grand as you Please, in Mrs. Straf-ford's coach, all smiles and Polightness—whood a bleeved! Well He's just come back, with two great Fractions of His skull, riding on a Bear,



insensible into The town—there's for you. Only Think of poor Mrs. Sturk, and the Chock she's got on sight of Him; and how thankful and Pleasant you should be that Charles Nutter is not a Corpes in the Buchar's wood, and jiggin Home to you like Sturk did. But well in health, what I'm certain shure he is, taken the law of Mary Matchwell—bles the Mark—to get her emprisind and Publickly wipid by the commin hangman." All which rhapsody conjured up a confused and dyspeptic dream, full of absurd and terrific images, which she could not well comprehend, except in so far as it seemed clear that some signal disaster had befallen Sturk.

That night, at nine o'clock, the great Doctor Pell arrived in his coach, with steaming horses, at Sturk's hall-door, where the footman thundered a tattoo that might have roused the dead; for it was the family's business, if they did not want a noise, to muffle the knocker. And the Doctor strode up, directed by the whispering awestruck maid, to Sturk's bed-chamber, with his hands in his muff, after the manner of doctors in his day, without asking questions, or hesitating on lobbies, for the sand of his minutes ran out in gold-dust. So, with a sort of awe and suppressed bustle preceding and following him, he glided upstairs and straight to the patient's bedside, serene, saturnine, and rapid.

In a twinkling the maid was running down the

street for Toole, who had kept at home, in state costume, expecting the consultation with the great man, which he liked. And up came Toole, with his brows knit, and his chin high, marching over the pavement in a mighty fuss, for he knew that the oracle's time and temper were not to be trifled with.

In the club, Larry the drawer, as he set a pint of mulled claret by old Arthur Slowe's elbow, whispered something in his ear, with a solemn wink.

"Ho! by Jove, gentlemen, the Doctor's come—Doctor Pell. His coach stands at Sturk's door, Larry says, and we'll soon hear how he fares." And up got Major O'Neill with a "hey! ho—ho?" and out he went, followed by old Slowe, with his little tankard in his fist, to the inn-door, where the Major looked on the carriage, lighted up by the footman's flambeau, beneath the old village elm—up the street—smoking his pipe still to keep it burning, and communicating with Slowe, two words at a time. And Slowe stood gazing at the same object with his little faded blue eyes, his disengaged hand in his breeches' pocket, and ever and anon wetting his lips with his hot cordial, and assenting agreeably to the Major's conclusions.

"Seize ace! curse it!" cried Cluffe, who I'm happy to say, had taken no harm by his last night's wetting; another gammon, I'll lay you fifty."

"Toole, I dare thay, will look in and tell us how



poor Sturk goes on," said Puddock, playing his throw.

"Hang it, Puddock, mind your game—to be sure, he will. Cinque ace! well, *curse* it! the same throw over again! 'Tis too bad. I missed taking you last time, with that stupid blot you've covered—and now, by Jove, it ruins me. There's no playing when fellows are getting up every minute to gape after doctors' coaches, and leaving the door open—hang it, I've lost the game by it—gammoned twice already. 'Tis very pleasant. I only wish when gentlemen interrupt play, they'd be good enough to pay the bets."

It was not much, about five shillings altogether, and little Puddock had not often a run of luck.

"If you'd like to win it back, Captain Cluffe, I'll give you a chance," said O'Flaherty, who was tolerably sober. I'll lay you an even guinea Sturk's dead before nine to-morrow morning; and two to one he's dead before this time to-morrow night."


"I thank you—no, sir—two doctors over him, and his head in two pieces—you're very obliging, Lieutenant, but I'll choose a likelier wager," said Cluffe.

Dangerfield, who was overlooking the party, with his back to the fire, appeared displeased at their levity—shook his head, and was on the point of speaking one of those polite but cynical reproofs, whose irony, cold and intangible,

intimidated the less potent spirits of the club-room. But he dismissed it with a little shrug. And a minute after, Major O'Neill and Arthur Slowe became aware that Dangerfield had glided behind them, and was looking serenely, like themselves, at the Dublin doctor's carriage and smoking team. The light from Sturk's bed-room window, and the red glare of the footman's torch, made two little trembling reflections in the silver spectacles as he stood in the shade, peering movelessly over their shoulders.

"'Tis a sorry business, gentlemen," he said in a stern, subdued tone. "Seven children and a widow. He's not dead yet, though: whatever Toole might do, the Dublin doctor would not stay with a dead man; time's precious. I can't describe how I pity that poor soul, his wife—what's to become of her and his helpless brood I know not."

Slowe grunted a dismal assent, and the Major, with a dolorous gaze, blew a thin stream of tobacco-smoke into the night air, which floated off like the ghost of a sigh towards the glimmering window of Sturk's bed-room. So they all grew silent. It seemed they had no more to say, and that, in their minds, the dark curtain had come down upon the drama of which the "noble Barney," as poor Mrs. Sturk called him, was hero.



## CHAPTER XXII.

IN WHICH DR. TOOLE, IN FULL COSTUME, STANDS UPON THE HEARTH-STONE OF THE CLUB, AND ILLUMINATES THE COMPANY WITH HIS BACK TO THE FIRE.

Two or three minutes later, the hall-door of Sturk's mansion opened wide, and the figure of the renowned Doctor from Dublin, lighted up with a candle from behind, and with the link from before, glided swiftly down the steps, and disappeared into the coach with a sharp clang of the door. Up jumps the footman, and gives his link a great whirl about his head. The maid stands on the step with her hand before the flaring candle. "The Turk's Head, in Werburgh-street," shouts the footman, and smack goes the coachman's whip, and the clang and rattle begin.

"That's Alderman Blunkett—he's dying," said the Major, by way of gloss on the footman's text; and away went the carriage with thundering wheels, and trailing sparks behind in, as if the wild huntsman had furnished its fleet and shadowy team.

"He has ten guineas in his pocket for that—a guinea a minute, by Jove, coining, no less," said



the Major, whose pipe was out, and he thinking of going in to replenish it. "We'll have Toole here presently, depend upon it."

He had hardly spoken when Toole, in a glare of candlelight, emerged from Sturk's hall-door. With one foot on the steps, the Doctor paused to give a parting direction about chicken-broth and white-wine whey.

These last injunctions on the door-steps had begun, perhaps in a willingness to let folks see and even hear that the visit was professional; and along with the lowering and awfully serious countenance with which they were delivered, had grown into a habit, so that, as now, he practised them even in solitude and darkness.

Then Toole was seen to approach the Phoenix, in full blow, his cane under his arm. With his full-dressed wig on, he was always grand and Æsculapian, and reserved withal, and walked with a measured tread, and a sad and important countenance, which somehow made him look more chubby; and he was a good deal more formal with his friends at the inn-door, and took snuff before he answered them. But this only lasted some eight or ten minutes after a consultation or momentous visit, and would melt away insensibly in the glow of the club-parlour, sometimes reviving for a minute, when the little mirror that sloped forward from the wall, showed him a passing portrait of his grand wig and toggery. And it was

pleasant to observe how the old fellows unconsciously deferred to this temporary self-assertion, and would call him, not Tom, nor Toole, but Doctor," or "Doctor Toole," when the fit was upon him.

And Devereux, in his day, won two or three wagers by naming the doctor with whom Toole had been closeted, reading the secret in the countenance and by-play of their crony. When it had been with tall, cold, stately, Dr. Pell, Toole was ceremonious and deliberate, and oppressively polite. On the other hand, when he had been shut up with brusque, half-savage, energetic Doctor Rogerson, Tom was laconic, decisive, and insupportably ill-bred, till, as we have said, the mirage melted away, and he gradually acquiesced in his identity. Then, little by little, the irrepressible gossip, jocular, and ballad minstrelsy were heard again, his little eyes danced, and his waggish smiles glowed once more, ruddy as a setting sun, through the nectarian vapours of the punch-bowl. The ghosts of Pell and Rogerson fled to their cold, dismal shades, and little Tom Toole was his old self again for a month to come.

"Your most obedient, gentlemen—your most obedient," said Toole, bowing and taking their hands graciously in the hall—"a darkish evening, gentlemen."

"And how does your patient, Doctor?" inquired Major O'Neill.

The Doctor closed his eyes, and shook his head slowly, with a gentle shrug.

"He's in a bad case, Major. There's little to be said, and that little, sir, not told in a moment," answered Toole, and took snuff.

"How's Sturk, sir?" repeated the silver spectacles, a little sternly.

"Well, sir, he's not *dead*; but, by your leave, had not we better go into the parlour, eh?—'tis a little chill, and, as I said, 'tis not all told in a moment—he's not dead, though, that's the sum of it—you first, pray proceed, gentlemen."

Dangerfield grimly took him at his word; but the polite Major got up a little ceremonious tussle with Toole in the hall. However, it was no more than a matter of half-a-dozen bows and waves of the hand, and "after you, sir;" and Toole entered, and after a general salutation in the style of Doctor Pell, he established himself upon the hearth-stone, with his back to the fire, as a legitimate oracle.

Toole was learned, as he loved to be among the laity on such occasions, and was in no undue haste to bring his narrative to a close. But the gist of the matter was this—Sturk was labouring under concussion of the brain, and two terrific fractures of the skull—so long, and lying so near together, that he and Doctor Pell instantly saw 'twould be impracticable to apply the trepan, in fact, that 'twould be certain and instantaneous death. He

was absolutely insensible, but his throat was not yet palsied, and he could swallow a spoonful of broth or sack whey from time to time. But he was a dead man to all intents and purposes. Inflammation might set in at any moment; at best he would soon begin to sink, and neither he nor Doctor Pell thought he had the smallest chance of awaking from his lethargy for one moment. He might last two or three days, or even a week—what did it signify?—what was he better than a corpse already? He could never hear, see, speak, or think again; and for any difference it could possibly make to poor Sturk, they might clap him in his grave and cover him up to-night.

Then the talk turned upon Nutter. Every man had his theory or his conjecture but Dangerfield, who maintained a discreet reserve, much to the chagrin of the others, who thought, not without reason, that he knew more about the state of his affairs, and especially of his relations with Lord Castlemallard, than perhaps all the world beside.

“Possibly, poor fellow, he was not in a condition to have his accounts overhauled, and on changing an agency things sometimes come out that otherwise might have kept quiet. He was the sort of fellow who would go through with a thing; and if he thought the best way on going out of the agency was to go out of the world also, out he’d go. They were always a resolute family—Nutter’s great uncle, you know, drowned

himself in that little lake—what do you call it?—in the county of Cavan, and 'twas mighty cooly and resolutely done too.”

But there was a haunting undivulged suspicion in the minds of each. Every man knew what his neighbour was thinking of, though he did not care to ask about his ugly dreams, or to relate his own. They all knew what sort of terms Sturk and Nutter had been on. They tried to put the thought away, for though Nutter was not a joker, nor a songster, nor a story-teller, yet they liked him. Besides, Nutter might possibly turn up in a day or two, and in that case 'twould go best with those who had not risked an atrocious conjecture about him in public. So every man waited, and held his tongue upon that point till his neighbour should begin.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

DOCTOR WALSHINGHAM AND THE CHAPELIZED CHRISTIANS  
MEET TO THE SOUND OF THE HOLY BELL, AND A VAM-  
PIRE SITS IN THE CHURCH.

THE next day the Sabbath bell from the ivied tower of Chapelized Church called all good churchfolk round to their pews and seats. Sturk's place was empty—already it knew him no more—and Mrs. Sturk was absent; but the little file of children, on whom the neighbours looked with an awful, and a tender curiosity, was there. Lord Townshend, too, was in the Viceregal seat, with gentlemen of his household behind, splendid in star and peruke, and eyed over their prayer-books by many inquisitive Christians. Nutter's little pew under the gallery was void like Sturk's. These sudden blanks were eloquent, and many, as from time to time the dismal gap opened silent before their eyes, felt their thoughts wander and lead them away in a strange and dismal dance, among the nodding hawthorns in the Butcher's-wood, amidst the damps of night, where Sturk lay in his leggings, and powder, and blood, and the beetle droned by unheeding, and no one saw him save

the guilty eyes that gleamed back as the shadowy shape stole swiftly away among the trees.

Dr. Walsingham's sermon had reference to the two-fold tragedy of the week, Nutter's supposed death by drowning, and the murder of Sturk. In his discourses he sometimes came out with a queer bit of erudition. Such as, while it edified one portion of his congregation, filled the other with unfeigned amazement.

"We may pray for rain," said he on one occasion, when the Collect had been read; "and for other elemental influence with humble confidence. For if it be true, as the Roman annalists relate, that their augurs could, by certain rites and imprecations, produce thunder-storms—if it be certain that thunder and lightning were successfully invoked by King Porsenna, and as Lucius Piso, whom Pliny calls a very respectable author, avers, that the same thing had frequently been done before his time by King Numa Pompilius, surely it is not presumption in a Christian congregation," and so forth.

On this occasion he warned his parishioners against assuming that sudden death is a judgment. "On the contrary, the ancients held it a blessing; and Pliny declares it to be the greatest happiness of life—how much more should we? Many of the Roman worthies, as you are aware, perished thus suddenly. Quintius Æmilius Lepidus, going out of his house struck his great toe against the

threshold and expired; Cneius Babius Pamphilus, a man of prætorian rank, died while asking a boy what o'clock it was; Aulus Manlius Torquatus, a gentleman of consular rank, died in the act of taking a cheese-cake at dinner; Lucius Tuscus Valla, the physician, deceased while taking a draught of mulsum; Appius Saufeius, while swallowing an egg; and Cornelius Gallus, the prætor, and Titus Haterius, a knight, each died while kissing the hand of his wife. And I might add many more names with which, no doubt, you are equally familiar."

The gentlemen of the household opened their eyes; the officers of the Royal Irish Artillery, who understood their man, winked pleasantly behind their cocked-hats at one another; and his Excellency coughed, with his perfumed pocket-handkerchief to his nose, a good deal; and Master Dickey Sturk, a grave boy, who had a side view of his Excellency, told his nurse that the Lord Lieutenant laughed in church! and was rebuked for that scandalum magnatum with proper horror

Then the good Doctor told them that the blood of the murdered man cried to heaven. That they might comfort themselves with the assurance that the man of blood would come to judgment. He reminded them of St. Augustin's awful words, "God hath woollen feet, but iron hands;" and he told them an edifying story of Mempricius, the son of Madan, the fourth King of England, then



called Britaine, after Brute, who murdered his brother Manlius, and mark ye this, after twenty years he was devoured by wild beasts; and another of one Bessus—'tis related by Plutarch—who, having killed his father, was brought to punishment by means of swallows, which birds, his guilty conscience persuaded him, in their chattering language did say to one another, that Bessus had killed his father, whereupon he bewrayed his horrible crime, and was worthily put to death. The great Martin Luther reports such another story of a certain Almaine, who, when thieves were in the act of murdering him, espying a flight of crows, cried aloud, "O crows, I take you for witnesses and revengers of my death." And so it fell out, some days afterwards, as these same thieves were drinking in an inn, a flight of crows came and lighted on the top of the house; whereupon the thieves, jesting, said to one another, "See, yonder are those who are to avenge the death of him we despatched t'other day," which the tapster overhearing, told forthwith to the magistrate, who arrested them presently, and thereupon they confessed, and were put to death. And so he went on, sustaining his position with strange narratives culled here and there from the wilderness of his reading.

Among the congregation that heard this sermon, at the eccentricities of which I have hinted, but which had, beside, much that was striking, simply

pathetic, and even awful in it, there glided—shall I say—a phantom, with the light of death, and the shadows of hell, and the taint of the grave upon him, and sat among these respectable persons of flesh and blood—impenetrable—secure—for he knew there were but two in the church for whom clever disguises were idle and transparent as the air. The blue-chinned, sly clerk, who read the responses, and quavered the Psalms so demurely, and the white-headed, silver-spectacled, upright man, in my Lord Castlemallard's pew, who turned over the leaves of his prayer-book so diligently, saw him as he was, and knew him to be Charles Archer; and one of these at least, as this dreadful spirit walked, with his light burning in the noon-day, dogged by inexorable shadows through a desolate world, in search of peace, he knew to be the slave of his lamp.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

IN WHICH DR. TOOLE AND MR. LOWE MAKE A VISIT AT THE MILLS, AND RECOGNISE SOMETHING REMARKABLE WHILE THERE.

AFTER church, Dr. Toole walking up to the Mills, to pay an afternoon visit to poor little Mrs. Nutter, was overtaken by Mr. Lowe, the magistrate, who brought his tall, iron-gray hunter to a walk as he reached him.

"Any tidings of Nutter?" asked he, after they had, in old world phrase, given one another the time of day.

"Not a word," said the Doctor; "I don't know what to make of it; but you know what's thought. The last place he was seen in was his own garden. The river was plaguey swollen Friday night, and just where he stood it's deep enough, I can tell you; often I bathed there when I was a boy. He was consumedly in the dumps, poor fellow; and, between ourselves, he was a resolute dog, and atrabilious, and just the fellow to make the jump into kingdom-come if the maggot bit: and you know his hat was fished out of the river a long way down. They dragged next morning, but—pish!—'twas all nonsense and moonshine; why,

there was water enough to carry him to Rings-end in an hour. He was a good deal out of sorts, as I said, latterly—a shabby design, sir, to thrust him out of my Lord Castlemallard's agency; but that's past and gone; and, besides, I have reason to know there was some kind of an excitement—a quarrel it could not be—poor Sally Nutter's too mild and quiet for that; but a—a—*something*—a—an—agitation—or a bad news—or something—just before he went out; and so, poor Nutter, you see, it looks very like as if he had done something rash.”

Talking thus, they reached the Mills by the river side, not far from Knockmaroon.

On learning that Toole was about making a call there, Lowe gave his bridle to a little Chapelizod raggamuffin, and, dismounting, accompanied the Doctor. Mrs. Nutter was in her bed.

“Make my service to your mistress,” said Toole, “and say I’ll look in on her in five minutes, if she’ll admit me.” And Lowe and the Doctor walked on to the garden, and so, side by side, down to the river’s bank.

“Hey!—look at that,” said Toole, with a start, in a hard whisper; and he squeezed Lowe’s arm very hard, and looked as if he saw a snake.

It was the impression in the mud of the same peculiar footprint they had tracked so far in the Park. There was a considerable pause, during

which Lowe stooped down to examine the details of the footmark.

"Hang it—you know—poor Mrs. Nutter—eh?" said Toole, and hesitated.

"We must make a note of that—the thing's important," said Mr. Lowe, sternly fixing his gray eye upon Toole.

"Certainly, sir," said the Doctor, bridling; "I should not like to be the man to hit him—you know; but it *is* remarkable—and, curse it, sir, if called on, I'll speak the truth as straight as *you*, sir—every bit, sir."

And he added an oath, and looked very red and heated.

The Magistrate opened his pocket-book, took forth the pattern sole, carefully superimposed it, called Toole's attention, and said—

"*You see.*"

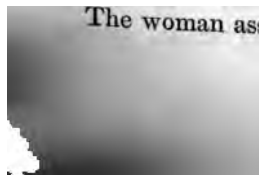
Toole nodded hurriedly; and just then the maid came out to ask him to see her mistress.

"I say, my good woman," said Lowe; "just look here. Whose footprint is that—do you know it?"

"Oh, why, to be sure I do. Isn't it the master's brogues?" she replied, frightened, she knew not why, after the custom of her kind.

"You observe that?" and he pointed specially to the transverse line across the heel. "Do you know that?"

The woman assented.



"Who made or mended these shoes?"

"Bill Heaney, the shoemaker, down in Martin's-row, there—'twas he made them, and mended them, too, sir."

So he came to a perfect identification, and then an authentication of his paper pattern; then she could say they were certainly the shoes he wore on Friday night—in fact, every other pair he had were then on the shoe-stand on the lobby. So Lowe entered the house, and got pen and ink, and continued to question the maid and make little notes; and the other maid knocked at the parlour-door with a message to Toole.

Lowe urged his going; and somehow Toole thought the Magistrate suspected him of making signs to his witness, and he departed ill at ease; and at the foot of the stairs he said to the woman—

"You had better go in there—that stupid Lynn is doing her best to hang your master, by Jove!"

And the woman cried—

"Oh, dear bless us!"

Toole was stunned and agitated, and so with his hand on the clumsy banister he strode up the dark staircase, and round the little corner in the lobby, to Mrs. Nutter's door

"Oh! madam, 'twill all come right, be sure," said Toole, uncomfortably, responding to a vehement and rambling appeal of poor Mrs. Nutter's

"And do you *really* think it will? Oh, Doctor, Doctor, *do* you think it will? The last two or

three nights and days—how many is it?—oh, my poor head—it seems like a month since he went away. And where do you think he is—do you think it's business?"

"Of course 'tis business, ma'am."

"And—and—oh, Doctor!—you really think he's safe?"

"Of course, madam, he's safe—what's to ail him?"

And Toole rummaged amongst the old medicine phials on the chimney-piece, turning their labels round and round, but neither seeing them nor thinking about them, and only muttering to himself with, I'm sorry to say, a curse here and there.

"You see, my dear ma'am, you must keep yourself as quiet as you can, or physic's thrown away upon you; you really must," said Toole.

"But, Doctor," pleaded the poor lady, "you don't know—I—I'm terrified—I—I—I'll never be the same again," and she burst into hysterical crying.

"Now, really, madam—confound it—my dear, good lady—you see—this will never do"—he was uncorking and smelling at the bottles in search of "the drops"—"and—and—here they are—and isn't it better ma'am you should be well and hearty—here, drink this—when—when he comes back—don't you see—than—a—a"—

"But—oh, I wish I could tell you. She said—she said—the—the—oh, you don't know"



"*She—who? Who said what?*" cried Toole, lending his ear, for he never refused a story.

"Oh! Doctor, he's gone—I'll never—never—I know I'll never see him again. Tell me he's not gone—tell me I'll see him again."

"Hang it, can't she stick to one thing at a time—the poor woman's half out of her wits," said Toole, provoked; "I'll wager a dozen of claret there's more on her mind than she's told to any one."

Before he could bring her round to the subject again, the Doctor was called down to Lowe; so he took his leave for the present; and after his talk with the magistrate, he did not care to go up again to poor little Mrs. Nutter; and Moggy was as white as ashes standing by, for Mr. Lowe had just made her swear to her little story about the shoes; and Toole walked home to the village with a heavy heart, and a good deal out of humour.

Toole knew that a warrant would be issued next day against Nutter. The case against him was black enough. Still, even supposing he had struck those trenchant blows over Sturk's head, it did not follow that it was without provocation or in cold blood. It looked, however, altogether so unpromising, that he would have been almost relieved to hear that Nutter's body had been found drowned in the river.

Still there was a chance that he made good his retreat. If he had not paid his fare in Charon's



packet-boat, he might, at least, have crossed the Channel in the *Trevor* or *Hillsborough* to Holyhead. Then, deuce was in it, if he did not make a fair run for it, and earth himself snugly somewhere. 'Twas lighter work then than now. "The old saying at London, among servants," writes that good-natured theatrical wag, Tate Wilkinson, "was, 'I wish you were at York,' which the wronged female cook now has changed for, 'I wish you were at Jamacia.' Scotland was then imagined by the Cockney as a dreary place, distant almost as the West Indies; *now*" (reader pray note the marvel) "an agreeable party may, with the utmost ease, dine early in the week in Grosvenor -square, and without discomposure set down at table on Saturday or Sunday in the new town of Edinburgh!" From which we learn that miracles of celerity were already accomplishing themselves, and that the existing generation contemplated their triumphs complacently. But even upon these we have improved, and now-a-days, our whole social organization is subservient to detection. Cut your telegraph wires, substitute sail-boats for steam, and your old fair and easy forty-miles-a-day stage-coaches for the train and the rail, disband your city police and detective organization, and make the transit of a letter between London and Dublin a matter of from five days to nearly as many weeks, and compute how much easier it was then than now for an ad-

venturous highwayman, an absconding debtor, or a pair of fugitive lovers, to make good their retreat. Slow, undoubtedly, was the flight—they did not run, they walked away; but so was pursuit, and altogether, without authentic lights and official helps—a matter of post-chaises and perplexity, cross-roads and rumour, foundering in a wild waste of conjecture, or swallowed in the quag of some country inn-yard, where nothing was to be heard, and out of which there would be no relay of posters to pull you until nine o'clock next morning.

As Toole debouched from Martin's-row, on his return, into the comparative amplitude of the main street of Chapelizod, he glanced curiously up to Sturk's bed-room windows. There were none of the white signals of death there, So he ascended the door-step, and paid a visit—of curiosity, I must say—and looked on the snorting image of his old foe, and the bandaged head, spell-bound and dreamless, that had machinated so much busy mischief against his own medical sovereignty and the rural administration of Nutter.

As Toole touched his pulse, and saw him swallow a spoonful of chicken broth, and parried poor Mrs. Sturk's eager quivering pleadings for his life with kind though cautious evasions, he rightly judged that the figure that lay there was more than half in the land of ghosts already—that the enchanter who met him in the Butcher's Wood,

and whose wand had traced those parallel indentures in his skull, had not only exorcised for ever the unquiet spirit of intrigue, but wound up the tale of his days. It was true that he was never more to step from that bed, and that his little children would, ere many days, be brought there by kindly, horror-loving maids, to look their last on "the poor master," and kiss awfully his cold stern mouth before the coffin lid was screwed down, and the white-robed image of their father hidden away for ever from their sight.

## CHAPTER XXV.

IN WHICH ONE OF LITTLE BOPEEP'S SHEEP COMES HOME AGAIN, AND VARIOUS THEORIES ARE ENTERTAINED RESPECTING CHARLES NUTTER AND LIEUTENANT PUDDOCK.

AND just on Monday morning, in the midst of this hurly-burly of conjecture, who should arrive, of all people in the world, and re-establish himself in his old quarters, but Dick Devereux. The gallant Captain was more splendid and handsome than ever. But both his spirits and his habits had suffered. He had quarrelled with his aunt, and she was his bread and butter—ay, buttered on both sides. How lightly these young fellows quarrel with the foolish old worshippers who lay their gold, frankincense, and myrrh, at the feet of the handsome, thankless idols. They think it all independence and high spirit, whereas we know it is nothing but a little egotistical tyranny, that unconsciously calculates even in the heyday of its indulgence upon the punctual return of the penitent old worshipper, with his or her votive offerings.

Perhaps the gipsy had thought better of it, and was already sorry he had not kept the peace. At all events, though his toilet and wardrobe were

splendid—for fine young fellows in his plight deny themselves nothing—yet morally he was seedy, and in temper soured. His duns had found him out, and pursued him in wrath and alarm to England, and pestered him very seriously indeed. He owed money beside to several of his brother officers, and it was not pleasant to face them without a guinea. An evil propensity, at which, as you remember, General Chatterworth hinted, had grown amid his distresses, and the sting of self-approach exasperated him. Then there was his old love for Lilia Walsingham, and the pang of rejection, and the hope of a strong passion sometimes leaping high and bright, and sometimes flickering into ghastly shadows and darkness.

Indeed, he was by no means so companionable just now as in happier times, and was sometimes confoundedly morose and snappish—for, as you perceive, things had not gone well with him latterly. Still he was now and then tolerably like his old self.

Toole, passing by, saw him in the window. Devereux smiled and nodded, and the Doctor stopped short at the railings, and grinned up in return, and threw out his arms to express surprise, and then snapped his fingers, and cut a little caper, as though he would say—"Now, you're come back—we'll have fun and fiddling again." And forthwith he began to bawl his inquiries and salutations. But Devereux called him up peremptorily,

for he wanted to hear the news—especially all about the Walsinghams. And up came Toole, and they had a great shaking of hands, and the Doctor opened his budget, and rattled away.

Of Sturk's tragedy and Nutter's disappearance he had already heard. And he now heard some of the club gossip, and all about Dangerfield's proposal for Gertrude Chatterworth, and how the old people were favourable, and the young lady averse—and how Dangerfield was content to leave the question in abeyance, and did not seem to care a jackstraw what the townspeople said or thought—and then he came to the Walsinghams, and Devereux for the first time really listened. The Doctor was very well—just as usual; and wondering what had become of his old crony, Dan Loftus, from whom he had not heard for several months; and Miss Lily was not very well—a delicacy here (and he tapped his capacious chest), like her poor mother. “Pell and I consulted about her, and agreed she was to keep within doors.” And then he went on, for he had a suspicion of the real state of relations between him and Lily, and narrated the occurrence rather with a view to collect evidence from his looks and manner, than from any simpler motive; and, said he, “Only think that confounded wench, Nan—you know—Nan Glynn.” And he related her and her mother's visit to Miss Lily, and a subsequent call made to the Rector himself—all, it must be confessed, very much as

it really happened. And Devereux first grew so pale as almost to frighten Toole, and then broke into a savage fury—and did not spare hard words, oaths, or maledictions. Then off went Toole, when things grew quieter, upon some other theme, giggling and punning, spouting scandal and all sorts of news—and Devereux was looking full at him with large stern eyes, not hearing a word more. His soul was cursing old Mrs. Glynn, of Palmerstown—that mother of lies, and what not—and remonstrating with old Dr. Walsingham—and protesting wildly against everything.

General Chatterworth, who returned two or three weeks after, was not half pleased to see Devereux. He had heard a good deal about him and his doings over the water, and did not like them. He had always had a misgiving that if Devereux remained in the corps, sooner or later he would be obliged to come to a hard reckoning with him. And the handsome Captain had not been three weeks in Chapelizod, when more than the General suspected that he was in nowise improved. So General Chatterworth did not often see or talk with him; and when he did, was rather reserved and lofty with him. His appointment on the staff was in abeyance—in fact, the vacancy on which it was expectant had not definitively occurred—and all things were at sixes and sevens with poor Dick Devereux.

That evening, strange to say, Sturk was still

living; and Toole reported him exactly in the same condition. But what did that signify? 'Twas all one. The man was dead—as dead to all intents and purposes that moment as he would be that day twelvemonth, or that day hundred years.

Dr. Walsingham, who had just been to see poor Mrs. Sturk—now grown into the habit of hoping, and sustained by the intense quiet fuss of the sick room—stopped for a moment at the door of the Phoenix, to answer the cronies there assembled, who had seen him emerge from the murdered man's house.

"He is in a profound lethargy," said the worthy divine. "'Tis a subsidence—his life, sir, stealing away like the fluid from the clepsydra—less and less left every hour—a little time will measure all out."

"What the plague's a clepsydra?" asked Cluffe of Toole, as they walked side by side into the club-room.

"Ho! pooh! one of those fabulous tumours of the epidermis mentioned by Pliny, you know, exploded ten centuries ago—ha, ha, ha!" and he winked and laughed derisively, and said, "Sure you know Doctor Walsingham."

And the gentlemen began spouting their theories about the murder and Nutter, in a desultory way; for they all knew the warrant was out against him.



"My opinion," said Toole, knocking out the ashes of his pipe upon the hob; for he held his tongue while smoking, and very little at any other time; "and I'll lay a guinea 'twill turn out as I say—the poor fellow's drowned himself. Few knew Nutter—I doubt if *any* one knew him as I did. Why he did not seem to feel anything, and you'd ha' swore nothing affected him, more than that hob, sir; and all the time, there wasn't a more thin-skinned, atrabilious poor dog in all Ireland—but honest, sir—thorough steel, sir. All I say is, if he had a finger in that ugly pie, you know, as some will insist, I'll stake my head to a china orange, 'twas a fair front to front fight. By Jupiter, sir, there wasn't one drop of cur's blood in poor Nutter. No, poor fellow; neither sneak nor assassin *there*"——

"They thought he drowned himself from his own garden—poor Nutter," said Major O'Neill.

"Well, that he did *not*," said Toole. "That unlucky shoe, you know, tells a tale; but for all that, I'm clear of the opinion that drowned he is. We tracked the step, Lowe and I, to the bank, near the horse-track, in Barrack-street, just where the water deepens—there's usually five feet of water there, and that night there was little short of ten. Now, take it, that Nutter and Sturk had a tussle—and the thing happened, you know—and Sturk got the worst of it, and was, in fact, laid dead at his feet, why, you know the kind of

panic—and—and—the panic—you know—a poor dog, finding himself so situated, would be in—with the bitter, old quarrel between them—d'ye see? And this at the back of his vapours and blue-devils, for he was dumpish enough before, would send a man like Nutter into a resolution of making away with himself; and that's how it happened, you may safely swear."

"And what do *you* think, Mr. Dangerfield?" asked the Major.

"Upon my life," said Dangerfield, briskly, lowering his newspaper to his knee, with a sharp rustle, "these are questions I don't like to meddle in. Certainly, he had considerable provocation, as I happen to know; and there was no love lost—that I know too. But I quite agree with Doctor Toole—if he was the man, I venture to say, 'twas a fair fight. Suppose, first, an altercation, then a hasty blow—Sturk had his cane, and a deuced heavy one—he wasn't a fellow to go down without knowing the reason why; and if they find Nutter, dead or alive, I venture to say he'll show some marks of it about him."

Cluffe wished the whole company, except himself, at the bottom of the Red Sea; for he was taking his revenge of Puddock, and had already lost a gammon and two hits. Little Puddock won by the force of the dice. He was not much of a player; and the sight of Dangerfield—that repulsive, impenetrable, moneyed man, who had "over-

come him like a summer cloud," when the sky of his fortunes looked clearest and sunniest, always led him to Belmont, and the side of his lady-love.

If Cluffe's mind wandered in that direction, his reveries were rather comfortable. He had his own opinion about his progress with Aunt Rebecca, who had come to like his conversation, and talked with him a great deal about Puddock, and always with acerbity. Cluffe, who was a sort of patron of Puddock's, always, to do him justice, defended him respectfully. And Aunt Rebecca would listen very attentively, and then shake her head, and say,

"You're a great deal too good-natured, Captain; and he'll never thank you for your pains, *never*—*I* can tell you."

Well, Cluffe knew that the higher powers favoured Dangerfield; and that, beside his absurd sentiment, not to say passion, which could not but be provoking, Puddock's complicity in the abortive hostilities of poor Nutter and the gallant O'Flaherty rankled in Aunt Becky's heart. She was, indeed, usually appeasable and forgiving enough; but in this case her dislike seemed inveterate and vindictive; and she would say—

"Well, let's talk no more of him; 'tis easy finding a more engaging subject; but you can't deny, Captain, that 'twas an unworthy hypocrisy his pretending to sentiments against duelling to me,

and then engaging as second in one on the very first opportunity that presented."

Then Cluffe would argue his case, and plead his excuses, and fumbled over it a good while; not that he'd have cried a great deal if Puddock had been hanged; but, I'm afraid, chiefly because, being a fellow of more gaiety and accomplishment than quickness of invention, it was rather convenient, than otherwise, to have a topic, no matter what, supplied to him, and one that put him in an amiable point of view, and in a kind of graceful, intercessorial relation to the object of his highly prudent passion. And Cluffe thought how patiently she heard him, though he was conscious 'twas rather tedious, and one time very like another. But then, 'twasn't the talk, but the talker; and he was glad, at all risks, to help poor Puddock out of his disgrace, like a generous soul, as he was.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

TELLING HOW A COACH DREW UP AT THE ELMS, AND TWO FINE LADIES, DRESSED FOR THE BALL, STEPPED IN.

It was now more than a fortnight since Sturk's mishap in the Butcher's Wood, and he was still alive, but still under the spell of coma. He was sinking, but very slowly; yet it was enough to indicate the finality of that "life in death."

Dangerfield once or twice attacked Toole rather tartly about Sturk's case.

"Can nothing be done to make him speak? Five minutes' consciousness would unravel the mystery."

Then Toole, would shrug, and say, "Pooh—pooh! my dear sir, you know nothing."

"Why, there's *life*?"

"Ay, the mechanical functions of life, but the brain's overpowered," replied Toole, with a wise frown.

"Well, relieve it."

"By Jupiter, sir, you make me laugh," cried Toole, with a grin, throwing up his eyebrows. "I take it, you think we doctors can work miracles."

"Quite the reverse, sir," retorted Dangerfield, with a cold scoff. "But you say he may possibly

live six weeks more; and all that time the wick is smouldering, though the candle's short—can't you blow it in, and give us even one minute's light?"

"Ay, a smouldering wick and a candle if you please; but enclosed in a glass bottle, how the deuce *are* you to blow it?"

"Pish!" said the silver spectacles, with an icy flash from his glasses.

"Why, sir, you'll excuse me—but you don't understand," said Toole, a little loftily. "There are two contused wounds along the scalp as long as that pencil—the whole line of each partially depressed, the depression all along being deep enough to lay your finger in. You can ask Irons, who dresses them when I'm out of the way."

"I'd rather ask you, sir," replied Dangerfield, in turn a little high.

"Well, you can't apply the trepan, the surface is too extended, and all unsound, and won't bear it—'twould be simply killing him on the spot—don't you see; and there's no way else to relieve him."

General Chatterworth had not yet returned. On his way home he had wandered aside, and visited the fashionable wells of Buxton, intending a three days' sojourn, to complete his bracing up for the winter. But the Pool of Siloam did not work pleasantly in the case of the robust General, who was attacked after his second dip with a smart fit of the gout in his left great-toe, where it went on charmingly, without any flickering

upward, quite stationary and natural for three weeks.

About the end of which time the period of the annual ball given by the officers of the Royal Irish Artillery arrived. It was a great event in the town. To poor Mrs. Sturk, watching by her noble Barney, it seemed, of course, a marvellous insensibility and an outrage. But the world must follow its instinct and vocation, and attend to its business, and amuse itself too, though noble Barneys lie a-dying here and there.

Aunt Becky and Gertrude drew up at the Elms, the Rector's house, with everything very handsome about them, and two laced footmen, with flambeaux, and went in to see little Lily, on their way to the ball, and to show their dresses, which were very fine, indeed, and to promise to come next day and tell her all the news; for Lily, as I mentioned, was an invalid, and balls and flic-flacs were not for her.

Little Lily smiled her bright girlish smile, and threw both her arms round grand Aunt Becky's neck. .

"You good, dear Aunt Becky, 'twas so kind and like you to come—you and Gertie. And, oh, Geminie! what a grand pair of ladies!" and she made a little rustic courtesy, like Nell in the farce "And I never saw this before (a near peep at Gertrade's necklace), and Aunt Becky, what beautiful lace. And does not she look hand-

some, Gertie? I *never* saw her look *so* handsome. She'll be the finest figure there. There's no such delicate waist anywhere." And she set her two slender little forefingers and thumbs together, as if spanning it. "You've no chance beside her, Gertie; she'll set all the young fellows a-sighing and simpering.

"You wicked little rogue! I'll beat you black and blue, for making fun of old Aunt Becky," cried Miss Rebecca, and ran a little race at her, about two inches to a step; her fan raised in her finger and thumb, and a jolly smile twinkling in her face, for she knew it was true about her waist, and she liked to be quizzed by the daring little girl. Her diamonds were on too, and her last look in her mirror had given her a satisfactory assurance, and she always played with little Lily, when they met; every one grew gay and girlish with her.

So they staid a full quarter of an hour, and the footman coughing laboriously outside the window reminded Aunt Rebecca at last how time flew; and Lily was for sitting down and playing a minuet and a country dance, and making them rehearse their steps, and calling in old Sally to witness the spectacle before they went; and so she and Aunt Becky had another little sportive battle—they never met, and seldom parted, without one. How was it that when gay little Lily provoked these little mimic skirmishes Aunt Becky would



look for a second or two an inexpressibly soft and loving look upon her, and become quite girlish and tender. I think there is a way to every heart, and some few have the gift to reach it unconsciously and always.

So away rustled the great ladies, leaving Lily excited, and she stood at the window, with flushed cheek, and her fingers on the sash, looking after them, and she came back with a little smile and tears in her eyes. She sat down, with a bright colour in her cheeks, and did play a country dance, and then a merry old Irish air, full of frolic and spirit, on the harpsichord; and gentle old Sally's face peeped in with a wistful smile, at the unwonted sounds.

"Come, sober old Sally, my sweetheart! I've taken a whim in my head, and you shall dress me, for to the ball I'll go."

"Tut, tut, Miss Lily, darling," said old Sally, with a smile and a shake of the head. "What would the doctors say?"

"What they please, my darling."

And up stood little Lily, with her bright colour and lustrous eyes.

"Angel bright!" said the old woman, looking in that beloved and lovely young face, and quite "filling up," as the saying is, "there is not your peer on earth—no—not one among them all to compare with our Miss Liliass," and she paused, smiling, and then she said—"But, my darling,

sure you know you wern't outside the door this five weeks."

"And is not that long enough, and too long, to shut me up, you cruel old woman? Come, come, Sally, girl, I'm resolved, and to the ball I'll go; don't be frightened. I'll cover my head, and only just peep in, muffled up, for ten minutes; and I'll go and come in the chair, and what harm can I take by it?"

Was it spirit? Did she want to show the folk that she did not shrink from meeting somebody; or that, though really ill, she ventured to peep in, through sheer liking for the scrape of the fiddle, and the fun, to show them that at least she was not heart-sick? Or was it the mysterious attraction, the wish to see him once more, just through her hood, far away, with an unseen side glance, and to build endless speculations, and weave the filmy web of hope, for who knows how long, out of these airy tints, a strange, sad smile, or deep, wild glance, just seen and fixed for ever in memory? She had given him up in words, but her heart had not given him up. Poor little Lily! She hoped all that was so bad in him would one day mend. He was a hero still—and, oh! she hoped, would be true to her. So Lily's love, she scarce knew how, lived on this hope—the wildest of all wild hopes—waiting on the reformation of a rake.

"But, darling Miss Lily, don't you know the

poor master would break his heart if he thought you could do such a wild thing as to go out again' the doctors' orders, at this time o' night, and into that hot place, and out again among the cold draughts."

Little Lily paused.

"'Tis only a step, Sally; do you honestly think it would vex him?"

"Vex him, darling? no, but break his heart. Why, he's never done asking about you, and—oh! it's only joking you are, my darling, that's all."

"No, Sally, dear love, I meant it," said little Lily, sadly; "but I suppose it was a wild thought, and I'm better at home."

And she played a march that had somehow a dash of the pathetic in it, in a sort of reverie, and she said:

"Sally, do you know that?"

And Sally's gentle face grew reflective, and she said:

"Sure, Miss Lilly, that's the tune—isn't it—the Artillery plays when they march out to the Park?"

Lily nodded and smiled, and the tune moved on, conjuring up its pictured reverie. Those review days were grand things when little Lilly was a child—magnanimous expenditure of hair and gum powder was there. There sat General Chatterworth, behind his guns, which were now blazing away like fun, wearing his full uniform, point cravat and ruffles, and that dignified and

somewhat stern aspect which he put on with the rest of his review-day costume, bestriding his cream-coloured charger, Bombardier, and his plume and powdered *ails de pigeon*, hardly distinguishable from the smoke which enveloped him, as a cloud does a demigod in an allegorical picture.

Chord after chord brought up all this moving pageant, unseen by Sally's dim old eyes, before the saddened gaze of little Lily, whose life was growing to a retrospect. She stood in the sunny street, again a little child, holding old Sally by the hand, on a soft summer day. The sentries presented arms, and the corps marched out resplendent. Old General Chatterworth, as proud as Lucifer, on Bombardier, who nods and champs, prancing and curvetting, to the admiration of the boys and terror of the women; but at heart the mildest of quadrupeds, though passing, like an impostor as he was, for a devil incarnate; the band thundering melodiously that dashing plaintive march, and exhilarating and firing the souls of all Chapelized. Up went the windows all along the street, the rabble-rout of boys yelled and huzzaed like mad. The maids popped their mob-caps out of the attics, and giggled, and hung out at the risk of their necks. The serving-men ran out on the hall-door steps. The village roués emerged in haste from their public houses. The whole scene round and along, from top to bottom,

was grinning and agape. Nature seemed to brighten up at sight of them; and the sun, himself, came out all in his best, with an unparalleled effulgence.

Yes, the town was proud of its corps, and well it might. As gun after gun, with its complement of men and its Lieutenant Fire-workers, with a "right wheel," rolled out of the gate upon the broad street, not a soul could look upon the lengthening pageant of blue and scarlet, with its symmetrical diagonals of snowy belt and long-flapped white cartouche boxes, moving together with measured swing; its laced cocked-hats, leggings, and courtly white shorts and vests, and ruffles, and all its buttons and brasses flashing up to the sun, without allowing it was a fine spirited sight.

And Lily, beholding the phantom regiment, with mournful eyes, played their grand sad march proudly as they passed.

They looked so dashing and so grand; they were the tallest, shapliest fellows. Faith, I can tell you, it was no such trifle, pulling along all those six and four pounders; and they needed to be athletic lads, with those fine limbs of theirs, so well shown off in shorts and leggings; and the officers were, with hardly an exception, martial, high-bred gentlemen, with aristocratic bearing, and some of them, without question, confoundedly handsome.

And always there was one light, tall shape; one dark handsome face, with darker, stranger eyes, and a nameless grace and interest moving with the march of the gay pageant, before her mind's eye, to this harmonious and regretful music, which, as she played on, and her reverie deepened, grew slower and more sad, till old Sally's voice awoke the dreamer. The chords ceased, the vision melted, and poor little Lily smiled sadly and kindly on old Sally, and took her candle, and went up with her to her bed.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

BEING A CHAPTER OF HOOPS, FEATHERS, AND BRILLIANTS,  
AND BUCKS AND FIDDLERS.

It was a mighty grand affair, this ball of the Royal Irish Artillery. General Chattesworth had arrived that morning, just in time to preside over the hospitalities—he could not contribute much to the dancing—and his advent, still a little lame, but looking, as his friends told him, ten years younger for his snug little fit of the gout at Buxton, reinstated Aunt Becky in her place of power, to the secret disappointment of Madam Strafford, who had set her heart on doing the honours, and rehearsed for weeks, over her toilet, and even in bed, her little speeches, airs, and graces.

Lord Castlemallard was there, of course—and the gay and splendid Lady Moira—whom I mention because General Chattesworth opened the ball in a minuet with her ladyship—hobbling with wonderful grace, and beaming with great ceremonious smiles through his honourable martyrdom. But there were more than a score of peers there beside, with their peeresses in tall feathers, diamonds, and monstrous hoops. And the Lord Lieutenant was very near coming—and a Lord

Lieutenant in those days, with a Parliament to open, and all the regalia of his office about him, was a far greater personage than, in our democratic age, the Sovereign in person.

Captain Cluffe had gone down in a chair to Puddock's lodgings, to borrow a pair of magnificent knee-buckles. Puddock had a second pair, and Cluffe's own had not, he thought, quite recovered their good looks since that confounded ducking on the night of the serenade. The gallant Captain, learning that Puddock and Devereux intended walking—it was only a step across to the barrack-yard—and finding that Puddock could not at the moment lay his hand upon the buckles, and not wishing to keep the chair longer—for he knew delay would inflame the fare, and did not like dispensing his shillings—

“Hey! walk? I like the fancy,” cried the gay Captain, sending half-a-crown down stairs to his “two-legged ponies,” as people pleasantly called them. “I'd rather walk with you than jog along in a chair by myself, my gay fellows, any day.”

Most young fellows of spirit, at the eve of a ball, have their heads pretty full. There is always some one bright particular star to whom, even as they look on their own handsome phizzes in the mirror, their adoration is paid.

Puddock's shoe-buckles flashed for Gertrude Chatterworth, as he turned out his toes. For her his cravat received its last careless touch—his



ruffles shook themselves, and fell in rich elegance about his plump little hands. For her his diamond ring gleamed like a burning star from his white little-finger; and for her the last fragrance was thrown over his pocket-handkerchief, and the last ogle thrown upon his looking-glass. All the interest of his elaborate toilet—the whole solemn process and detail—was but a worship of his divinity, at which he officiated. Much in the same way was Cluffe affected over his bedizement in relation to his own lady-love; but in a calmer and more longheaded fashion. Devereux's toilet most of the young fellows held to be perfection; yet it seemed to trouble him less than all the rest. I believe it was the elegant and slender shape that would have set off anything, and that gave to his handsome costume and "properties" an undefinable grace not their own. Indeed, as he leaned his elbow upon the window-sash, looking carelessly across the river, he did not seem much to care what became of the labours of his toilet.

"I have not seen her since I came; and now I'm going to this stupid ball on the chance of meeting her there. And she'll not come—she avoids me—the chance of meeting her—and she'll not come. Well! if she be not kind to me, what care I for whom she be? And what great matter, after all, if she were there. She'd be, I suppose, on her high horse—and—and 'tis not a feather to

me. Let her take her own way What care I? If she's happy, why shouldn't I—why shouldn't I?"

Five minutes after:

"Who the plague are these fellows in the Phoenix? How the brutes howl over their liquor?" said Devereux, as he and Puddock, at the door-steps, awaited Cluffe, who was fixing his buckles in the drawing-room.

"The Corporation of Tailors," answered Puddock, a little loftily, for he had notions about birth and gentle blood; and he was not inwardly pleased that the precincts of the "Phoenix" should be profaned by their mechanical orgies.

Through the open bow-window of the great oak parlour of the inn was heard the mighty voice of the President, who was now in the thick of his political toasts.

"Odds bud!" lisped little Puddock, "what a stentorian voice!"

"Considering it issues from a tailor!" acquiesced Devereux, who thought he recognised the accents, and hated tailors, who plagued him with long bills and dangerous menaces.

"May the friends of the Marquis of Kildare be ever blessed with the tailor's thimble," declaimed the portentous toast master. "May the needle of distress be ever pointed at all mock patriots; and a hot needle and a burning thread to all sewers of sedition!" and then came an applauding roar.

"And may you ride into town on your own

goose, with a hot needle behind you, you roaring pigmy!" added Devereux.

"The Irish cooks that can't relish French sauce!" enunciated the same grand voice, that floated, mellowed, over the field.

"Sauce, indeed!" said Puddock, with an indignant lisp, as Cluffe, having joined them, they set forward together; "I saw some of them going in, sir, and to look at their vulgar, unthinking countenances, you'd say they had not capacity to distinguish between the taste of a quail and a goose; but, by Jove! sir, they have a dinner. *You're* a politician, Cluffe, and read the papers. You remember the bill of fare—don't you?—at the Lord Mayor's entertainment in London."

Cluffe, whose mind was full of other matters, nodded his head with a grunt.

"Well, I'll take my oath," pursued Puddock, "you couldn't have made a better dinner at the Prince of Travendahl's table. Spanish olea, if you please—ragou royal, cardoons, tendrons, shell-fish in marinade, ruffs and rees, wheat-ears, green morels, fat livers, combs and notts. 'Tis rather odd, sir, to us who employ them, to learn that our tailors, while we're eating the dinners we do—our *tailors*, sir, are absolutely gorging themselves with such things—with *our* money, by Jove!"

"*Yours*, Puddock, not mine," said Devereux. "I haven't paid a tailor these six years. But, hang it, let's get on."

So, in they walked by the barrack-yard, lighted up now with a splendid red blaze of torches, and, with different emotions, entered the already crowded ball-room.

Devereux looked round the room, among nodding plumes and flashing brilliants, and smirking old bucks, and simpering young ones, amidst the buzz of two or three hundred voices, and the thunder and braying of the band. There were scores of pretty faces there—blondes and brunettes—blue eyes and brown—and more spirit and animation, and, I think, more grace too, in dance and talk, than the phlegmatic affectation of modern days allows; and there were some bright eyes that, not seeming to look, yet recognised, with a little thrill at the heart, and a brighter flush, the brilliant, proud Devereux—so handsome, so impulsive, so unfathomable—with his gipsy tint, and great enthusiastic eyes, and strange melancholy, subacid smile. But to him the room was lifeless, and the hour was dull, and the music but a noise and a jingle.

“I knew quite well she wasn’t here, and she never cared for me, and I—why should I trouble my head about her? She makes her cold an excuse. Well, maybe yet she’ll wish to see Dick Devereux, and I far away. No matter. They’ve heard slanders of me, and believe them. Amen, say I. If they’re so light of faith, and false in friendship, to cast me off for a foul word or an

idle story—curse it—I'm well rid of that false and foolish friendship, and can repay their coldness and aversion with a light heart, a bow, and a smile. One slander I'll refute—yes—and that done, I'll close this idle episode in *my* cursed epic, and never, *never* think of her again."

But fancy will not be controlled by resolutions though ne'er so wise and strong, and precisely as the Captain vowed "never"—away glided that wild, sad, sprite across the moonlit river, and among the old black elms, and stood unbidden beside Lilius. Little Lily, as they used to call her five years ago; and Devereux, who seemed to look so intently and so strangely on the flash and whirl of the dancers, saw but an old-fashioned drawing-room with roses clustering by the windows, and heard the sweet rich voice, to him the music of Ariel, like a far-off dirge—a farewell—sometimes a forgiveness—and sometimes the old pleasant talk and merry little laugh, all old remembrances or vain dreams now.

But Devereux had business on his hands that night, and about eleven o'clock he had disappeared. 'Twas easy to go and come in such a crowd, and no one perceive it.

"Devereux, Cluffe, and I were all late," said little Puddock, with his lisp. "I hope the General was not vexed. He brought in a new tragedy—Devereux I mean—and I fell a reading, and so time slipped away; and I wasn't ready when

Cluffe came—and, by Jupiter, 'tis a fine performance; I'll take the book to bed with me, but first I must dance this country dance."

It was to be a caper with the fair Magnolia, and the polite little Puddock never would own to any one, even to himself, how he suffered on these occasions.

"There's another thing you ought to take to bed with you," said Toole, with a look of preternatural solemnity; "and if you dance you won't."

"What's that?" asked Puddock.

"Your supper," whispers Toole, with a horrid chuckle.

"Dithguthing!" exclaimed Puddock, with dignity, pulling on his gloves.

But Puddock was very happy and excited. Mervyn, whom he had once feared, was there, a mere spectator, however, to witness that night's signal triumph. He had never danced so much with Miss Gertrude before, that is to say, at a great ball like this at which there was a plenty of bucks with good blood and lots of money; and indeed, it seemed to favour the idea of his success that Aunt Rebecca acknowledged him only with a silent and by no means gracious courtesy.

She was talking to Toole about Lilius, and saying how much better she had looked that evening.

"She's not better, ma'am; I'd rather she hadn't the bright flush you speak of, there's something, you see, not quite right in that left lung, and that

bright tint, madam, is hectic—she's not better, madam, not that we don't hope to see her so—Heaven forbid—but 'tis an anxious case;" and Toole shook his head gravely.

When Aunt Becky was getting on her hood and mantle, she invariably fell into talk with some crony who had a story to tell, or a point to discuss. So as she stood listening to old Colonel Bligh's hard, reedy gabble, and popping in her decisive word now and then, Gertrude equipped for the night air, and with little Puddock for her escort, glided out and took her place in the great state coach of the Chattesworths, and the door being shut, she made a little nod and a faint smile to her true knight, and said with the slightest possible shrug—

"How cold it is to-night; my Aunt, I think, will be obliged for your assistance, Lieutenant Puddock; as for me, I must shut up my window and wish you good night."

And with another smile she accordingly shut up the window, and when his best bow was accomplished, she leaned back with a pale and stricken countenance, and a great sigh—such a one as caused Lady Macbeth's physician, long ago, to whisper, "What a sigh is there! the heart is sorely charged." The footmen were standing by the open door, through which Aunt Becky was to come, and there were half a dozen carriages crowded side by side, the lackeys being congre-

gated, with links lighted about the same place of exit; and things being so, there came a small sharp tapping at the far window of the carriage, and with a start Gertrude saw the identical mantle, and the three-cocked-hat with the peculiar corners, which had caused certain observers so much speculation on another night, and drawing close to the window, whereat this apparition presented itself, she let it down.

"I know, beloved Gertrude, what you would say," he softly said; "but be it frenzy or no, I cannot forbear; I am unalterable—be you the same."

A white, slender hand glided in and seized her's, not resisting.

"Yes, Mordaunt, the same; but, oh! how miserable!" said Gertrude, and with just the slightest movement in the fingers of her small hand, hardly perceptible, and yet how fond a caress!

"I'm like a man who has lost his way among the catacombs—among the dead," whispered this shrouded figure, close to the window, still fervently holding her hand, "and sees at last the distant light that shows him that his horrible wanderings are to end. Yes, Gertrude, my beloved—yes, Gertrude, idol of my solitary love—the mystery is about to end—I'll end it. Be I what I may, you know the worst, and have given me your love and troth—you are my affianced bride; rather than lose you, I would die; and I think, or



I am walking in a dream, I've but to point my finger against two men, and all will be peace and light—light and peace—to me long strangers!"

At this moment Aunt Becky's voice was heard at the door, and the flash of the flambeaux glared on the window. He kissed the hand of the pale girl hurriedly, and the French cocked-hat and mantle vanished.

In came Aunt Rebecca in a fuss, and it must be said in no very gracious mood, and rather taciturn and sarcastic; and so away they rumbled over the old bridge towards Belmont.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

IN WHICH THE GHOSTS OF A BYE-GONE SIN KEEP TRYST.

DEVEREUX, wrapped in his cloak, strode into the Park, through Parson's gate, up the steep hill, and turned towards Castleknock and the furze and hawthorn wood that interposes. The wide plain spread before him in solitude, with the thin vapours of night lying over it like a film in the moonlight.

Two or three thorn trees stood out from the rest, a pale and solitary group, stooping eastward with the prevailing sweep of a hundred years or more of westerly winds. To this the gipsy captain glided, in a straight military line, his eye searching the distance ; and, after a while, from the skirts of the wood, there moved to meet him a lonely female figure, with her light clothing fluttering in the cold air. At first she came hurriedly, but as they drew near, she came more slowly.

Devereux was angry, and, like an angry man, he broke out first with—

“ So, your servant, Mistress Nan ! Pretty lies you've been telling of me—you and your shrew of a mother. You thought you might go to the

Rector and say what you pleased, and I hear nothing of it."

Nan Glynn was undefinably aware that he was very angry, and had hesitated and stood still before he began, and now she said imploringly—

"Sure, Masther Richard, it wasn't me."

"Come, my lady, don't tell me. You and your mother—curse her!—went to the Elms in my absence—you and she—and said I had promised to marry you! There—yes or no. Didn't you? And could you, or could she, have uttered a more utterly damnable lie?"

"'Twas *she*, Masther Richard—troth an' faith, I never knew she was going to say the like—no more I didn't."

"A likely story, truly, Miss Nan!" said the young rake, bitterly.

"Oh! Masther Richard! by this cross!—you won't believe me—'tis as true as you're standin' there—until she said it to Miss Lily"—

"Hold your tongue!" cried Devereux, so fiercely, that she thought him half wild; "do you think 'tis a pin's point to me which of you first coined or uttered that most infernal falsehood. Listen to me: I'm a desperate man, and I'll take a course with you both you'll not like, unless you go to-morrow and see Dr. Walsingham yourself, and tell him the whole truth—yes, the truth—what the devil do I care—speak that, and make the most of it. But tell him plainly that your

story about my having promised to marry you—do you hear—was a lie, from first to last—a lie—a lie—without so much as a grain of truth mixed up in it. All a cursed—devil's—woman's invention. Now, mind ye, Miss Nan, if you don't, I'll bring you and your mother into court, or I'll have the truth out of you."

"But there's no need to threaten, sure, you know, Masther Richard, I'd do anything for you—I would. I'd beg, or I'd rob, or I'd die for you, Masther Richard; and whatever you bid me, your poor wild Nan 'ill do."

Devereux was touched, the tears were streaming down her pale cheeks, and she was shivering.

"You're cold, Nan; where's your cloak and riding hood?" he said, gently.

"I had to part them, Masther Richard."

"You want money, Nan," he said, and his heart smote him.

"I'm not cold when I'm near you, Masther Richard. I'd wait the whole night long for a chance of seeing you; but oh! ho—[she was crying as if her heart would break, looking in his face, and with her hands just a little stretched towards him] oh, Masther Richard, I'm nothing to you now—your poor wild Nan!"

Poor thing! Her mother had not given her the best education. I believe she was a bit of a thief, and she could tell fibs with fluency and precision. The woman was a sinner; but her wild,

strong affections were true, and her heart was not in pelf.

"Now, don't cry—where's the good of crying—listen to me," said Devereux.

"Sure I heerd you were sick, last week, Masther Richard," she went on, not heeding, and with her cold fingers just touching his arm timidly—and the moon glittered on the tears that streamed down her poor imploring cheeks—"an' I'd like to be caring you; an' I think you look bad, Masther Richard."

"No, Nan—I tell you, no—I'm very well, only poor, just now, Nan, or *you* should not want."

"Sure I know, Masther Richard: it is not that. I know you'd be good to me if you had it; and it does not trouble me."

"But see, Nan, you must speak to your friends, and say"—

"Sorra a friend I have—sorra a friend, Masther Richard; and I did not spake to the priest this year or more, and I darn't go near him," said the poor Palmerstown lass that was once so merry.

"Why won't you listen to me, child, I won't have you this way. You must have your cloak and hood. 'Tis very cold; and, by heavens, Nan, you shall never want while I have a guinea. But you see I'm poor now, curse it—I'm poor—I'm sorry, Nan, and I have only this one about me."

"Oh, no, Masther Richard, keep it—maybe you'd want it yourself."

"No, child, don't vex me—there—I'll have money in a week or two, and I'll send you some more, Nan—I'll not forget you." He said this in a sadder tone; "and, Nan, I'm a changed man. All's over, you know, and we'll see one another no more. You'll be happier, Nan, for the parting, so here, and now, Nan, we'll say good-bye."

"Oh! no—no—no—not good-bye; you couldn't—couldn't—couldn't—your poor wild Nan."

And she clung to his cloak, sobbing in wild supplication.

"Yes, Nan, good-bye, it must be—no other word."

"An' oh, Masther Richard, is it in airnest? You wouldn't oh! sure you wouldn't."

"Now, Nan, there's a good girl; I must go. Remember your promise, and I'll not forget you, Nan—on my soul, I won't."

"Well, well, mayn't I chance to see you, maybe; mayn't I look at you marching, Masther Richard, at a distance only? I wouldn't care so much, I think, if I could see you sometimes."

"Now, there, Nan, you must not cry; you know 'tis all past and gone, more than a year ago. 'Twas all d——d folly—all my fault; I'm sorry Nan—I'm sorry; and I'm a changed man, and I'll lead a better life, and so do you, my poor girl."

"But mayn't I see you? I'm not askin' to spake to you, Masther Richard; this is the last time, I know, 'tis only right. Only sometimes to see you,

far off, maybe." Poor Nan was crying all the time she spoke;—"Well, well, I'll go, I will, indeed, Masther Richard; only let me kiss your hand—an' oh! no, no, don't say good-bye, an' I'll go—I'm gone now, an' maybe—just maybe, you might some time chance to wish to see your poor, wild Nan again—only to see her, an' I'll be thinkin' o' that."

The old feeling—if anything so coarse deserved the name—was gone; but he pitied her with all his heart; and that heart, such as it was—though she did not know it—was bleeding for her.

He saw her, poor creature, hurrying away in her light clothing, through the sharp, moonlight chill, which, even in the wrapping of his thick cloak, he felt keenly enough. She looked over her shoulder—then stopped; perhaps, poor thing, she thought he was relenting, and then she began to hurry back again. They cling so desperately to the last chance. But that, you know, would never do. Another pleading—another parting—So he turned sharply and strode into the thickets of the close brushwood, among which the white mists of night were hanging. He thought, as he stepped resolutely and quickly on, with a stern face, and heavy heart, that he heard a wild sobbing cry in the distance, and that was poor Nan's farewell.

So Devereux glided on like a ghost, through the noiseless thicket, and scarcely knowing or

caring where he went, emerged upon the broad open plateau, and skirting the Fifteen Acres, came, at last, to a halt upon the high ground overlooking the river—which ran, partly in long trains of silver sparkles, and partly in deep blue shadow beneath him. Here he stopped; and looked towards the village where he had passed many a pleasant hour—with a profound and remorseful foreboding that there were no more such pleasant hours for him; and his eye wandered among the scattered lights that still twinkled from the distant windows; and he fancied he knew, among them all, that which gleamed pale and dim through the distant elms—the star of his destiny; and he looked at it across the water—a greater gulf severed them—so near, and yet a star in distance—with a strange mixture of sadness and defiance, tenderness and fury.



## CHAPTER XXIX.

OF A SOLEMN RESOLUTION WHICH CAPTAIN DEVEREUX  
REGISTERED AMONG HIS HOUSEHOLD GODS, WITH A  
LIBATION.

WHEN Devereux entered his drawing-room, and lighted his candles, he was in a black and bitter mood. He stood at the window for a while, and drummed on the pane, looking in the direction of the barrack, where all the fun was going on, but thinking, in a chaotic way, of things very different, and all toned with that strange sense of self-reproach and foreboding which, of late, had grown habitual with him—and not without just cause.

“This shall be the last. ’Twas dreadful, seeing that poor Nan; and I want it—I can swear, I really and honestly want it—only one glass to stay my heart. Everyone may drink in moderation—especially if he’s heartsick, and has no other comfort—one glass and no more—curse it.”

So one glass of brandy—I’m sorry to say, unmixed with water—the handsome misanthropist sipped and sipped, to the last drop; and then sat down before his fire, and struck, and poked, and stabbed at it in a bitter, personal sort of way.

until here and there some blazes leaped up, and gave his eyes a dreamy sort of occupation; and he sat back, with his hands in his pockets, and his feet on the fender, gazing among the Plutonic peaks and caverns between the bars.

"I've had my allowance for to-night; to-morrow night, none at all. 'Tis an accursed habit; and I'll not allow it to creep upon me. No, I've never fought it fairly, as I mean to do now—'tis quite easy, if one has but the will to do it."

So he sat before his fire, chewing the cud of bitter fancy only; and he recollected he had not quite filled his glass, and up he got with a swagger, and says he—

"We'll drink fair, if you please—one glass—one only—but that, hang it—a bumper."

So he made a rough calculation.

"We'll say so much—here or there, 'tis no great matter. A thimble-full won't drown me. Pshaw! that's too much. What am I to do with it?—hang it. Well, we can't help it—'tis the last."

So whatever the quantity may have been, he drank it too, and grew more moody; and was suddenly called up from the black abyss by the entrance of little Puddock, rosy and triumphant, from the ball.

"Ha! Puddock! Then, the fun's over. I'm glad to see you. I've been *tête-à-tête* with my shadow—cursed bad company, Puddock. Where's Cluffe?"

"Gone home, I believe."

"So much the better. You know Cluffe better than I, and there's a secret about him I never could find out. *You* have, maybe?"

"What's that?" lisped Puddock.

"Why, 'tis what the deuce Cluffe's good for."

"Oh! tut! We all know Cluffe's a very good fellow."

Devereux looked from under his finely-pencilled brows with a sad sort of smile at good little Puddock.

"Puddock," says he, "I'd like to have you write my epitaph."

Puddock looked at him with his round eyes a little puzzled, and then he said—

"You think, maybe, I've a turn for making verses; and you think also I like you, and there you're quite right."

Devereux laughed, but kindly, and shook the fat little hand he proffered.

"I wish I were like you, Puddock. We've the knowledge of good and evil between us. The knowledge of good is all yours: you see nothing but the good that men have; you see it—and, I dare say, truly—where I can't. The darker knowledge is mine."

Puddock, who thought he thoroughly understood *King John*, *Shylock*, and *Richard III.*, was a good deal taken aback by Devereux's estimate of his penetration.

"Well, I don't think you know me, Devereux," resumed he, with a thoughtful lisp. "I'm much mistaken, or I could sound the depths of a villain's soul as well as most men."

"And if you did you'd find it full of noble qualities," said Dick Devereux. "What book is that?"

"The tragical history of Doctor Faustus," answered Puddock. "I left it here more than a week ago. Have you read it?"

"Faith, Puddock, I forgot it! Let's see what 'tis like," said Devereux. "Hey day!" And he read—

Now, Faustus, let thine eyes with horror stare  
Into that vast perpetual torture-house ;  
There are the Furies tossing damned souls  
On burning forks ; there bodies boil in lead ;  
There are live quarters broiling on the coals  
That ne'er can die ; this ever-burning chair  
Is for o'er-tortured souls to rest them in ;  
These that are fed with sops of flaming fire  
Were gluttons, and loved only delicates,  
And laughed to see the poor starve at their gates."

"Tailors! by Jupiter! Serve 'em right, the rogues. Tailors dining upon ragou royal, Spanish olea, Puddock—fat livers, and green morels in the Phoenix, the scoundrels, and laughing to see poor gentlemen of the Royal Irish Artillery starving at their gates—hang 'em.

"Well! well! Listen to the *Good Angel*," said

Puddock, taking up the book and declaiming his best—

“O thou hast lost celestial happiness,  
Pleasures unspeakable, bliss without end.  
Hadst thou affected sweet divinity,  
Hell or the devil had no power on thee—  
Hadst thou kept on that way. Faustus, behold  
In what resplendent glory thou hadst sat,  
On yonder throne, like those bright shining spirits,  
And triumphed over hell! That hast thou lost;  
And now, poor soul, must thy good angel leave thee;  
The jaws of hell are open to receive thee.”

“Stop that; ’tis all cursed rant,” said Devereux. That is, the thing itself; you make the most of it.”

Why, truly,” said Puddock, “there are better speeches in it. But ’tis very late; and parade, you know—I shall go to bed. And you”——

“No. I shall stay where I am.”

“Well, I wish you good night, dear Devereux.”

“Good night, Puddock.”

And the plump little fellow was heard skipping down stairs, and the hall-door shut behind him. Devereux took the play that Puddock had just laid down, and read for a while with a dreary kind of interest. Then he got up, and, I’m sorry to say, drank another glass of the same strong waters.

“To-morrow I turn over a new leaf;” and he caught himself repeating Puddock’s snatch of Macbeth, “To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow.”

Devereux looked out, leaning on the window-sash. All was quiet now, as if the rattle of a carriage had never disturbed the serene cold night. The town had gone to bed, and you could hear the sigh of the river across the field. A sadder face the moon did not shine upon.

"That's a fine play, Faustus—Marlowe," he said. Some of the lines he had read were booming funereally in his ear like a gigantic bell. "I wonder whether Marlowe had run a wild course, like some of us here—myself—and could not retrieve. That honest little mountebank, Puddock, does not understand a word of it. I wish I were like Puddock. Poor little fellow!"

So, after a while, Devereux returned to his chair before the fire, and on his way again drank of the waters of Lethe, and sat down, not forgetting, but remorseful, over the fire.

"I'll drink no more to-night—there—curse me if I do."

The fire was waxing low in the grate. "To-morrow's a new day. Why, I never made a resolution about it before. I can keep it. 'Tis easily kept. To-morrow I begin."

And with fists clenched in his pockets, he vowed his vow, with an oath, into the fire; and ten minutes were not past and over when his eye wandered thirstily again to the flask on the middle of the table, and with a sardonic, flushed smile, he quoted the "Good Angel's" words:—

"O, Faustus, lay that damned book aside,  
And gaze not on it lest it tempt thy soul."

And then pouring out a dram, he looked on it lovingly, and says he, with the "Evil Angel"—

"Go forward, Faustus, in that famous art,  
Wherein all Nature's treasure is contained:  
Be thou on earth, as Jove is in the sky,  
Lord and commander of the elements."

And then, with a solitary sneer, he sipped it. And after a while he drank one glass more—they were the small glasses then in vogue—and shoved it back, with—

"There; that's the last."

And then, perhaps, there was one other "last;" and after that "the *very* last." Hang it! it *must* be the last, and so on, I suppose. And Devereux was pale, and looked wild and sulky on parade next morning.

## CHAPTER XXX.

IN WHICH A LIBERTY IS TAKEN WITH MR. NUTTER'S NAME,  
AND MR. DANGERFIELD STANDS AT THE ALTAR.

POOR Mrs. Nutter continued in a state of distracted and flighty tribulation, not knowing what to make of it, nor, indeed, knowing the worst; for the neighbours did not tell her half they might, nor drop a hint of the dreadful suspicion that dogged her absent helpmate.

She was sometimes up rummaging among the drawers, and fidgetting about the house, without any clear purpose, but oftener lying on her bed, with her clothes on, crying. When she got hold of a friend, she disburthened her soul, and called on him or her for endless consolations and assurances, which, for the most part, she herself prescribed. There were, of course, fits of despair as well as starts of hope; and bright ideas, accounting for everything, and then clouds of blackness, and tornadoes of lamentation.

Father Roach, a good-natured apostle, whose digestion suffered when anyone he liked was in trouble, paid her a visit; and being somehow confounded with Dr. Toole, was shown up to her bed-room, where the poor little woman lay crying



under the coverlet. On discovering where he was, the good father was disposed to flinch, and get down stairs, in tenderness to his "character," and thinking what a story "them villians o' the world 'id make iv it down at the club there." But on second thoughts, poor little Sally being neither young nor comely, he ventured, and sat down by the bed, veiled behind a strip of curtain; and poured his mellifluous consolations into her open ears.

And poor Sally became eloquent in return. And Father Roach dried his eyes, although she could not see him behind the curtain, and called her "my daughter," and "dear lady," and tendered such comforts as his housekeeping afforded. "Had she bacon in the house?" or "maybe she'd like a fat fowl?" "She could not eat!" "Why then she could make elegant broth of it, and dhrink it, an' he'd keep another fattenin' until Nutter himself come back."

"And then, my honey, you an' himself 'ill come down and dine wid ould Father Austin; an' we'll have a grand evenin' of it entirely, laughin' over the remimbrance iv these blackguard troubles, acuishla! Or maybe you'd accept iv a couple o' bottles of claret or canaries? I see—you don't want for wine."

So there was just one more offer the honest fellow had to make, and he opened with assurances 'twas only between himself an' her—an' not a

sowl on airth 'id ever hear a word about it—and he asked her pardon, but he thought she might chance to want a guinea or two, just till Nutter came back, and he brought a couple in his waist-coat pocket.

Poor Father Roach was hard-up just then. Indeed, the being “hard-up” was a chronic affection with him. Two horses were not to be kept for nothing. Nor for the same moderate figure was it possible to maintain an asylum for unfortunates and outlaws—pleasant fellows enough, but endowed with great appetites and an unquenchable taste for consolation in fluid forms.

A clerical provision in Father Roach's day, and church, was not by any means what we have seen it since. At all events, he was not often troubled with the possession of money, and when half-a-dozen good weddings brought him in fifty or a hundred pounds, the holy man was constrained forthwith to make distribution of his assets among a score of sour, and sometimes dangerous, tradespeople. I mention this in no disparagement of Father Roach, quite the contrary. In making the tender of his two guineas—which, however, Sally declined—the worthy cleric was offering the widow's mite; not like some lucky dogs who might throw away a thousand or two and be nothing the worse; and you may be sure the poor fellow was very glad to find she did not want it.

“Rather hard measure, it strikes me,” said

Dangerfield, in the club, "to put him in the *Husband-and-Cry*."

But there he was, sure enough, "Charles Nutter, Esq., formerly of the Mills, near Knockmaroon, in the county of Dublin;" and a full description of the dress he wore, as well as of his height, complexion, features—and all this his poor little wife, still inhabiting the Mills, and quite unconscious that any man, woman, or child, who could prosecute him to conviction, for a murderous assault on Dr. Sturk, should have £50 reward.

"News in to-day, by Jove," said Toole, bustling solemnly into the club; "by the packet that arrived at one o'clock, a man taken, answering Nutter's description exactly, just going aboard of a Jamaica brig at Gravesend, and giving no account of himself, he's to be sent over to Dublin for identification."

And when that was thoroughly discussed two or three times over, they fell to talking of other subjects, and among the rest of Devereux, and wondered what his plans were; and there being no brother officers by, whether he meant to keep his commission, and various speculations as to the exact cause of the coldness shown him by General Chatterworth. Dick Spaight thought it might be that he had not asked Miss Gertrude in marriage.

But this was pooh-poohed. "Besides, they knew at Belmont," said Toole, who was an authority upon the domestic politics of that

family, and rather proud of being so, "just as well as I did, that Gipsy Dick was in love with Miss Liliass; and I lay you fifty he'd marry her to-morrow if she'd have him."

Toole was always a little bit more intimate with people behind their backs, so he called Devereux "Gipsy Dick."

"She's ailing, I hear," said old Slowe.

"She is, indeed, sir," answered the Doctor, with a grave shake of the head.

"Nothing of moment, I hope?" he asked.

"Why, you see it may be; she had a bad cough last winter, and this year she took it earlier, and it has fallen very much on her lungs; and you see, we can't say, sir, what turn it may take, and I'm very sorry she should be so sick and ailing—she's the prettiest creature, and the best little soul; and I don't know, on my conscience, what the poor old parson would do if anything happened her, you know. But I trust, sir, with care, you know, 'twill turn out well."

The season for trout-fishing was long past and gone, and there were no more pleasant rambles for Dangerfield and Irons along the flowery banks of the devious Liffey. Their rods and nets hung up, awaiting the return of genial spring; and the churlish stream, abandoned to its wintry mood, darkled and roared savagely under the windows of the Brass Castle.

One dismal morning, as Dangerfield's energetic

step carried him briskly through the town, the iron gate of the church-yard, and the door of the church itself standing open, he turned in, glancing upward as he passed at Sturk's bed-room windows, as all the neighbours did, to see whether General Death's white banners were floating there, and his tedious siege ended—as end it must—and the garrison borne **silently away** in his custody to the prison house.

Up the aisle marched Dangerfield, not abating his pace, but with a swift and bracing clatter, like a man taking a frosty constitutional walk.

Irons was moping softly about in the neighbourhood of the reading-desk, and about to mark the places of psalms and chapters in the great church Bible and Prayer-book, and sidelong he beheld his crony of the angle marching, with a grim confidence and swiftness, up the aisle.

“I say, where's Martin?” said Dangerfield, cheerfully.

“He's gone away, sir.”

“Hey! then you've no one with you?”

“No, sir.”

Dangerfield walked straight on, up the step of the communion-table, and shoving open the little balustraded door, he made a gay stride or two across the holy precinct, and with a quick right-about-face, came to a halt, the white, scoffing face, for exercise never flushed it, and the cold, broad sheen of the spectacles, looked odd in the clerk's

eyes, facing the church-door, from beside the table of the sacrament, displayed, as it were, in the very frame—foreground, background, and all—in which he was wont to behold the thoughtful, simple, holy face of the Rector.

“Alone among the dead! and not afraid?” croaked the white face pleasantly.

The clerk seemed always to writhe and sweat silently under the banter of his comrade of the landing-net, and he answered, without lifting his head, in a constrained and dogged sort of way, like a man who expects something unpleasant—

“Alone? yes, sir, there’s none here but ourselves.”

And his face flushed, and the veins on his forehead stood out, as will happen with a man who tuggs at a weight that is too much for him.

“I saw you steal a glance at Charles when he came into the church here, and it strikes me, I was at the moment thinking of the same thing as you, to wit, will he require any special service at our hands? Well, he does! and you or I must do it. He’ll give a thousand pounds, mind ye; and that’s something in the way of fellows like you and me; and whatever else he may have done, Charles has never broke his word in a money matter. And, hark’ce, can’t you thumb over that Bible and Prayer-book on the table here as well as *there*. Do so. Well”——

And he went on in a lower key, still looking

full front at the church-door, and a quick glance now and then upon Irons, across the communion-table.

"'Tis nothing at all—don't you see—what are you afraid of? It can't change events—'tis only a question of to-day or to-morrow—a whim—a maggot—hey? You can manage it this way, mark ye."

He had his pocket-handkerchief by the two corners before him, like an apron, and he folded it neatly and quickly into four.

"Don't you see—and a little water. You're a neat hand, you know; and if you're interrupted, 'tis only to blow your nose in't—ha, ha, ha!—and clap it in your pocket; and *you* may as well have the money—hey? Good morning."

And when he had got half-way down the aisle, he called back to Irons, in a loud, frank voice—

"And Martin's not here—could you say where he is?"

But he did not await the answer, and glided with quick steps from the porch, with a side leer over the wavy green mounds and tombstones. He had not been three minutes in the church, and across the street he went, to the shop over the way, and asked briskly where Martin, the sexton, was. Well, they did not know.

"Ho! Martin," he cried across the street, seeing that functionary just about to turn the corner by Sturk's hall-door steps; "a word with you.

I've been looking for you. See, you must take a foot-rule, and make all the measurements of that pew, you know; don't mistake a hair's breadth, d'ye mind, for you must be ready to swear to it; and bring a note of it to me, at home, to-day, at one o'clock, and you shall have a crown piece."

From which the reader will perceive—as all the world might, if they had happened to see him enter the church just now—that his object in the visit was to see and speak with Martin; and that the little bit of banter with Irons, the clerk, was all by-play, and parenthesis, and beside the main business, and, of course, of no sort of consequence.

Mr. Irons, like most men of his rank in life, was not much in the habit of exact thinking. His ruminations, therefore, were rather confused, but, perhaps, they might be translated in substance, into something like this—

"Why, the —— can't he let them alone that's willing to let him alone; I wish he was in his own fiery home, and better people at rest. I *can't* mark them places—I don't know whether I'm on my head or heels."

And he smacked the quarto Prayer-book down upon the folio Bible with a sonorous bang, and glided out, furious, frightened, and taciturn, to the Salmon House.

He came upon Dangerfield again only half-a-dozen steps from the turn into the street. He had just dismissed Martin, and was looking into a



note in his pocket-book, and either did not see, or pretended not to see, the clerk. But some one else saw and recognised Mr. Irons; and, as he passed, directed upon him a quick, searching glance. It was Mr. Mervyn, who happened to pass that way. Irons, and Dangerfield, and the church-yard—there was a flash of association in the group and the background which accorded with an old suspicion. Dangerfield, indeed, was innocently reading a leaf in his red and gilt leather pocket-book, as I have said. But Irons' eyes met the glance of Mervyn, and contracted oddly, and altogether there gleamed out something indefinable in his look. It was only for a second—a glance and an intuition; and from that moment it was one of Mervyn's immovable convictions, that Mr. Dangerfield knew something of Irons' secret. It was a sort of intermittent suspicion before—now it was a monstrous, but fixed belief.

So Mr. Irons glided swiftly on to the Salmon House, where, in a dark corner, he drank something comfortable; and stalked back again to the holy pile, with his head aching, and the world round him like a wild and evil dream.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

BEING A NIGHT SCENE, IN WHICH MISS GERTRUDE CHATTESWORTH, BEING ADJURED BY AUNT BECKY, MAKES ANSWER.

IN Aunt Becky's mind, the time could not be far off when the odd sort of relations existing between the Belmont family and Mr. Dangerfield must be defined. The Croesus, himself, indeed, was very indulgent. He was assiduous and respectful; but he wisely abstained from pressing for an immediate decision, and trusted to reflection and to Aunt Becky's good offices; and knew that his gold would operate by its own slow, but sure, gravitation.

At one time he had made up his mind to be peremptory—and politely to demand an unequivocal “yes,” or “no.” But a letter reached him from London; it was from a great physician there. Whatever was in it, the effect was to relieve his mind of an anxiety. He never, indeed, looked anxious, or moped like an ordinary man in blue-devils. But his servants knew when anything weighed upon his spirits, by his fierce, short, maniacal temper. But with the seal of that letter the spell broke, the evil spirit departed for a while,

and the old jocose, laconic irony came back, and glittered whitely in the tall chair by the fire, and sipped its claret after dinner, and sometimes smoked its long pipe and grinned into the embers of the grate. At Belmont, there had been a skirmish over the broiled drum-sticks at supper, and the ladies had withdrawn in towering passions to their nightly devotions and repose.

Gertrude had, of late, grown more like herself, but was quite resolute against the Dangerfield alliance, which Aunt Becky fought for the more desperately that in their private confidences under the poplar trees she had given the rich cynic of the silver spectacles good assurance of success.

Puddock drank tea at Belmont—nectar in Olympus—that evening, Was ever Lieutenant so devoutly romantic? He had grown more fanatical and abject in his worship. He spoke less, and lisped in very low tones. He sighed often, and sometimes mightily; and ogled unhappily, and smiled lackadaisically. The beautiful damsel was, in her high, cold way, kind to the guest, and employed him about the room on little commissions, and listened to his speeches without hearing them, and rewarded them now and then with the gleam of a smile, which made his gallant little heart flutter up to his solitaire, and his honest powdered head giddy.

"I marvel, brother," ejaculated Aunt Becky, suddenly appearing in the parlour, where the

General had made himself comfortable over his novel, and opening her address with a smart stamp on the floor. The veteran's heart made a little jump, and he looked up over his gold spectacles.

"I marvel, brother, what you can mean, desire, or intend, by all this ogling, sighing, and love-making; 'tis surely a strange way of forwarding Mr. Dangerfield's affair."

He might have blustered a little, as he sometimes did, for she had startled him, and her manner was irritating; but she had caught him in a sentimental passage between Lovelace and Miss Harlowe, which always moved him—and he showed no fight at all; but his innocent little light blue eyes looked up wonderingly and quite gently at her.

"Who—I? *What* ogling, sister Becky?"

"You! tut! That foolish, ungrateful person, Lieutenant Puddock; what can you propose to yourself, brother, in bringing Lieutenant Puddock here? I hate him."

"Why, what about Puddock—what has he done?" asks the General, with round eyes still, and closing his book on his finger.

"What has he done! Why, he's at your daughter's feet," cried Aunt Becky, with scarlet cheeks, and flashing eyes; "and she—artful gipsy has brought him there by positively making love to him."

"Sweet upon Toodie (the General's old pet

name for Gertrude); why, half the young fellows are—you know—pooh, pooh,” and the General stood up with his back to the fire—looking uneasy; for, like many other men, he thought a woman’s eyes saw further in such a case than his.

“Do you wish the young huzzy—do you—to marry Lieutenant Puddock? I should not wonder! Why, of course, her fortune you and she may give away to whom you like; but remember, she’s young, and has been much admired, brother; and may make a great match; and in our day, young ladies were under direction, and did not marry without apprizing their parents or natural guardians. Here’s Mr. Dangerfield, who proposes great settlements. Why won’t she have him? For my part, I think we’re little better than cheats; and I mean to write to-morrow morning and tell the poor gentleman that you and I have been bamboozling him to a purpose, and meant all along to marry the vixen to a poor lieutenant in your corps. Speak truth, and shame the devil, brother; for my part, I’m sick of the affair, I’m sick of deception, ingratitude, and odious fools.”

Aunt Becky had vanished in a little whirlwind, leaving the General with his back to the fire, looking blank and uncomfortable. And from his little silver tankard he poured out a glassful of his mulled claret, not thinking, and smelled to it deliberately, as he used to do when he was tasting a new wine, and looked through it, and set the glass

down, forgetting he was to drink it, for his thoughts were elsewhere.

On reaching her bed-room, which she did with impetuous haste, Aunt Becky shut the door with a passionate slam, and said, with a sort of choak and a sob, "There's nought but ingratitude on earth—the odious, odious, *odious* person!"

And when, ten minutes after, her maid came in, she found Aunt Rebecca but little advanced in her preparations for bed; and her summons at the door was answered by a fierce and shrilly nose-trumpetting, and a stern "Come in, huzzy—are you deaf, child?" And when she came in, Aunt Becky was grim, and fussy, and her eyes red.

Miss Gertrude was that night arrived just on that dim and delicious plateau—that debatable land upon which the last waking reverie and the first dream of slumber mingle together in airy dance and shifting colours—when, on a sudden, she was recalled to a consciousness of her grave bed-posts, and damask curtains, by the voice of her aunt.

Sitting up, she gazed on the redoubted Aunt Becky through the lace of her *bonnet de nuit*, for some seconds, in a mystified and incredulous way.

Mistress Rebecca Chatterworth, on the other hand, had drawn the curtains, and stood, candle in hand, arrayed in her night-dress, like a ghost, only she had on a pink and green quilted dressing-gown loosely over it.

She was tall and erect, of course; but she looked softened and strange; and when she spoke, it was in quite a gentle, humble sort of way, which was perfectly strange to her niece.

"Don't be frightened, sweetheart," said she, and she leaned over, and with her arm round her neck, kissed her. "I came to say a word, and just to ask you a question. I wish, indeed I do—heaven knows—to do my duty; and, my dear child, will you tell me the whole truth—will you tell me truly?—You will, when I ask it as a kindness."

There was a little pause, and Gertrude looked with a pale gaze upon her aunt.

"Are you," said Aunt Becky—"do you, Gertrude—do you like Lieutenant Puddock?"

"Lieutenant Puddock!" repeated the girl, with the look and gesture of a person in whose ear something strange has buzzed.

"Because, if you really are in love with him, Gertie; and that he likes you; and that, in short"—Aunt Becky was speaking very rapidly, but stopped suddenly.

"In love with Lieutenant Puddock!" was all that Miss Gertrude said.

"Now, do tell me, Gertrude, if it be so—tell me, dear love. I know 'tis a hard thing to say," and Aunt Becky considerably began to fiddle with the ribbon at the back of her niece's night-cap, so that she need not look in her face; "but,

Gertie, tell me truly, do you like him; and—  
and—why, if it be so, I will mention Mr. Danger-  
field's suit no more. There now—there's all I  
want to say."

"Lieutenant Puddock!" repeats young madam  
in the night-cap; and by this time the film of  
slumber was gone; and the suspicion struck her  
somehow in altogether so comical a way that she  
could not help laughing in her aunt's sad, earnest  
face.

"Fat, funny little Lieutenant Puddock!—was  
ever so diverting a disgrace? Oh! dear aunt,  
what have I done to deserve so prodigious a sus-  
picion?"

It was plain, from her heightened colour, that  
her aunt did not choose to be laughed at.

"What have you done?" said she, quite briskly,  
"Why—what have you done?" and Aunt Becky  
had to consider just for a second or two, staring  
straight at the young lady through the crimson  
damask curtains. "You have—you—you—why,  
what have you *done*?" and she covered her confu-  
sion by stooping down to adjust the heel of her  
slipper.

"Oh! it's delightful—plump little Lieutenant  
Puddock!" and the graver her aunt looked the  
more irrepressibly she laughed; till that lady, evi-  
dently much offended, took the young gentlewo-  
man pretty roundly to task.

"Well! I'll tell you what you have done," said



she, almost fiercely. "As absurd as he is, you have been twice as sweet upon him as he upon you; and you have done your endeavour to fill his brain with the notion that you are in love with him, young lady; and if you're not, you have acted, I promise you, a most unscrupulous and unpardonable part by a most honourable and well-bred gentleman—for that character I believe he bears. Yes—you may laugh, madam, how you please; but he's allowed, I say, to be as honest, as true, as fine a gentleman as—as"——

"As ever surprised a weaver," said the young lady, slyly, and laughing till she almost cried. In fact, she was showing in a new light, and becoming quite a funny character upon this theme. And, indeed, this sort of convulsion of laughing seemed so unaccountable on natural grounds to Aunt Rebecca, that her irritation subsided into perplexity, and she began to suspect that her extravagant merriment might mean possibly something which she did not quite understand.

"Well, niece, when you have quite done laughing at nothing, you will, perhaps, be so good as to hear me. I put it to you now, young lady, as your relation and your friend, once for all, upon your sacred honour—remember you're a Chatterworth—upon the honour of a Chatterworth" (a favourite family form of adjuration on serious occasions with Aunt Rebecca), "do you like Lieutenant Puddock?"

It was now Miss Gertrude's turn to be nettled, and to remind her visiter, by a sudden flush in her cheek and a flash from her eyes, that she was, indeed, a Chatterworth; and with more disdain than, perhaps, was quite called for, she repelled the soft suspicion.

"I protest, madam," said Miss Gertrude, "'tis ~~too~~ bad. Truly, madam, it *is* *vastly* vexatious to have to answer so strange and affronting a question. If you ever took the trouble, aunt, to listen to, or look at, Lieutenant Puddock, you might"——

"Well, niece," quoth Aunt Becky, interrupting, with a little toss of her head, "young ladies weren't quite so hard to please in my time, and I can't see or hear that he's so much worse than others."

"I'd sooner die than have him," said Miss Gertie, peremptorily.

"Then, I suppose, if ever, and whenever he asks you the question himself, you'll have no hesitation in telling him so?" said Aunt Becky, with becoming solemnity.

"Laughable, ridiculous, comical, and absurd, as I always thought and believed Lieutenant Puddock to be, I yet believe the asking such a question of me to be a stretch of absurdity, from which his breeding, for he is a gentleman, will restrain him. Besides, madam, you can't possibly be aware of the subjects on which he has in-

variably discoursed whenever he happened to sit by me—plays and players, and candied fruit. Really, madam, it is too absurd to have to enter upon one's defence against so incredible an imagination."

Aunt Rebecca looked steadily for a few seconds in her neice's face, then drew a long breath, and leaning over, kissed her again on the forehead, and with a grave little nod, and looking on her again for a short space, without saying a word more, she turned suddenly and left the room.

Miss Gertrude's vexation again gave way to merriment; and her aunt, as she walked sad and stately upstairs, heard one peal of merry laughter after another ring through her niece's bed-room. She had not laughed so much for three years before; and this short visit cost her, I am sure, two hours' good sleep at least.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

RELATING SOME AWFUL NEWS THAT REACHED THE VILLAGE, AND HOW DR. WALSINGHAM VISITED CAPTAIN RICHARD DEVEREUX AT HIS LODGINGS.

AND now there was news all over the town, to keep all the tongues there in action.

News — news — great news! — terrible news! Peter Fogarty, Mr. Tresham's boy, had it that morning from his cousin, Jim Redmond, whose aunt lived at Ringsend, and kept the little shop over against the "Plume of Feathers," where you might have your pick and choice of all sorts of nice and useful things—bacon, brass snuff-boxes, penny ballads, eggs, candles, cheese, tobacco-pipes, pinchbeck buckles for knee and instep, soap, sausages, and who knows what beside.

No one quite believed it—it was a tradition at third-hand, and Peter Fogarty's cousin, Jim Redmond's aunt, was easy of faith;—Jim, it was presumed, not very accurate in narration, and Peter, not much better. Though, however, it was not actually "intelligence," it was a startling thesis. And though some raised their brows and smiled, and shook their heads, the whole town certainly pricked their ears at it. And not a man met

another without a "Well! anything more? You've heard the report, sir—eh?"

It was not till Doctor Toole came out of town, early that day, that the sensation began in earnest.

"There could be no doubt about it—'twas a wonderful strang thing certainly. After so long a time—and so well preserved too."

"*What* was it—what *is* it?"

"Why, Charles Nutter's corpse is found, sir!"

"Corpse—hey!"

"So Toole says. Hold! Toole—Doctor Toole—I say. Here's Mr. Slowe hasn't heard about poor Nutter."

"Ho! neighbour Slowe—give you good-day, sir—not heard it? By Jove, sir—poor Nutter!—'tis true—his body's found—picked up this morning, just at sunrise, by two Dunleary fishermen, off Bullock. Justice Lowe has seen it—and Spaight saw it too. I've just been speaking with him, not an hour ago, in Thomas-street. It lies at Ringsend—and an inquest in the morning.

And so on in Doctor Toole's manner, until he saw Dr. Walsingham, the good rector, pausing in his leisurely walk just outside the row of houses that fronted the turnpike, in one of which were the lodgings of Dick Devereux.

The good Doctor Toole wondered what brought his reverence there, for he had an inkling of something going on. So he bustled off to him, and told his story with the stern solemnity

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befitting such a theme, and that pallid half-suppressed smile with which an exciting horror is sometimes related. And the good Rector had many ejaculations of consternation and sympathy, and not a few inquiries to utter. And at last, when the theme was quite exhausted, he told Toole, who still lingered on, that he was going to pay his respects to Captain Devereux.

"Oh!" says cunning little Toole, "you need not, for I told him the whole matter."

"Very like, sir," answered the Doctor; "but 'tis on another matter I wish to see him."

"Oh!—ho!—certainly—very good, sir. I beg pardon—and—and—he's just done his breakfast—a late dog, sir—ha! ha! Your servant, Doctor Walsingham."

Devereux puzzled his comrade Puddock more than ever. Sometimes he would descend with his blue devils into the abyss, and sit there all the evening in a dismal sulk. Sometimes he was gayer even than his old gay self; and sometimes in a bitter vein, talking enigmatical ironies, with his strange smile; and sometimes he was dangerous and furious, just as the weather changes, without rhyme or reason. Maybe he was angry with himself, and thought it was with others; and was proud, sorry, and defiant, and let his moods, one after another, possess him as they came.

They were his young days—beautiful and wicked—days of clear, rich tints, and sanguine

throbbings, and *gloria mundi*—when we fancy the spirit perfect, and the body needs no redemption—when, fresh from the fountains of life, death is but a dream, and we walk the earth like heathen gods and goddesses, in celestial egotism and beauty. Oh, fair youth!—gone for ever. The parting from thee was a sadness and a violence—sadder, I think, than death itself. We look behind us, and sigh after thee, as on the pensive glories of a sunset, and our march is toward the darkness. It is twilight with us now, and will soon be starlight, and the hour and place of slumber, till the reveille sounds, and the day of wonder opens. Oh, grant us a good hour, and take us to Thy mercy! But to the last those young days will be remembered and worth remembering; for be we what else we may, young mortals we shall never be again.

Of course Dick Devereux was now no visiter at the Elms. All *that* for the present was over. Neither did he see Liliás; for little Lily was now a close prisoner with doctors, in full uniform, with shouldered canes, mounting guard at the doors. 'Twas a hard winter, and she needed care and nursing. And Devereux chafed and fretted; and, in truth, 'twas hard to bear this spite of fortune—to be so near, and yet so far—quite out of sight and hearing.

A word or two from General Chatterworth in Doctor Walsingham's ear, as they walked to and

fro before the white front of Belmont, had decided the Rector on making this little call; for he had now mounted the stair of Devereux's lodging, and standing on the carpet outside, knocked, with a grave, sad face, on his door panel, glancing absently through the lobby window, and whistling inaudibly the while.

The Doctor was gentle and modest, and entirely kindly. He held good Master Felltham's sweet doctrine about reproofs. "A man," says he, "had better be convinced in private than be made guilty by a proclamation. Open rebukes are for Magistrates and Courts of Justice; for Stelled Chambers and for Scarlets, in the thronged Hall. Private are for friends; where all the witnesses of the offender's blushes are blinde and deaf and dumb. We should do by them as Joseph thought to have done by Mary, seeke to cover blemishes with secrecy. Public reproofe is like striking of a Deere in the Herd; it not only wounds him to the loss of enabling blood, but betrays him to the Hound, his Enemy; and makes him by his fellows, be pusht out of company."

So on due invitation from within, the good parson entered, and the handsome Captain in all his splendours—when you saw him after a little absence 'twas always with a sort of admiring surprise—you had forgot how *very* handsome he was—this handsome slender fellow, with his dark face and large, unfathomable violet eyes, so wild and



wicked, and yet so soft, stood up surprised, with a look of welcome, quickly clouded and crossed by a gleam of defiance.

They bowed, and shook hands, however, and bowed again, and each was the other's "servant;" and being seated, they talked *de generalibus*; for the good parson would not come like an executioner and take his prisoner by the throat, but altogether in the spirit of the shepherd, content to walk a long way about, and wait till he came up with the truant, and entreating him kindly, not dragging or beating him back to the flock, but leading and carrying by turns, and so awaiting his opportunity. But Devereux was in one of his moods. He thought the Doctor no friend to his suit, and was bitter, and formal, and violent.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

OF A CERTAIN TEMPEST THAT AROSE AND SHOOK THE CAPTAIN'S SPOONS AND TEA-CUPS ; AND HOW THE WIND SUDDENLY WENT DOWN.

"I'm very glad, sir, to have a few quiet minutes with you," said the Doctor, making then a little pause; and Devereux thought he was going to re-open the matter of his suit. "For I've had no answer to my last letter, and I want to know all you can tell me of that most promising young man, Daniel Loftus, and his most curious works."

"Dan Loftus is dead and——" (I'm sorry to say he added something else); "and his works have followed him, sir," said the strange Captain, savagely; for he could not conceive what business the Doctor had to think about *him*, when Captain Devereux's concerns were properly to be discussed. So though he had reason to believe he was quite well, and in Malaga with his "honourable" and sickly cousin, he killed him off-hand, and disposed summarily of his works.


There was an absolute silence of some seconds after this scandalous explosion; and Devereux said—"In truth, sir, I don't know. They hold him capable of taking charge of my wise cousin—hang him!—so I dare say he can take care of



come, and the voice of the turtle be heard in our land."

"Sir," said Dick Devereux, in a voice that sounded strangely, "I have a request; may I make it?—a favour to beg. 'Tisn't, all things remembered, very much. If I write a letter, and place it open in your hand—a letter, sir—to Miss Lily—will you read it to her, or else let her read it? Or even a message—a spoken message—will you give it?"

"Captain Devereux," said the Doctor, in a reserved but very sad sort of way, "I must tell you that my dear child is by no means well. She has had a cold, and it has not gone away so soon as usual—something I think of her dear mother's delicacy—and so she requires care, my little Lily, a great deal of care. But, thank God, the spring is before us. Yes, yes; the soft air and sunshine, and then she'll be out again. You know the garden, and her visits, and her little walks. So I don't fret or despair. Oh, no." He spoke very gently, in a reverie, after his wont, and he sighed heavily. "You know 'tis growing late in life with me, Captain Devereux," he resumed, "and I would fain see her united to a kind and tender partner, for I think she's a fragile little flower. Poor little Lily! Something, I often think, of her dear mother's delicacy, and I have always nursed her, you know. She has been a great pet;" and he stopped suddenly, and walked to the window



"A great pet. Indeed, if she could have been spoiled, I should have spoiled her long ago, but she could not. Ah, no! Sweet little Lily."

Then quite firmly but gently Parson Walsingham went on:—

"Now, the Doctors say she mustn't be agitated, and I can't allow it, Captain Devereux. I gave her your message—let me see—why 'tis four, ay, five months ago. I gave it with a good will, for I thought well of you."

"And you don't any longer—there, 'tis all out," broke in Devereux, fiercely.

"Well, you know her answer; it was not lightly given, nor in haste, and first and last 'twas quite decided, and I sent it to you under my own hand."

"I thought you were a friend to me, Dr. Walsingham, and now I'm sure you're none," said the young fellow, in the same bitter tone.

"Ah, Captain Devereux, he can be no friend to you who is a friend to your faults; and you no friend to yourself if you be an enemy to him that would tell you of them. Will you like him the worse that would have you better?"

"We've *all* faults, sir; mine are not the worst, and I'll have neither shrift nor absolution. There's some reason here you wo'n't disclose."

He was proud, fierce, pale, and glaring, and looked damnably handsome and wicked.

"She gave *no* reason, sir;" answered Dr. Walsingham. "No, she gave none; but, as I under-

stood, she did not love you, and she prayed me to mention it no more."

"She gave no reason; but you *know* the reason," glared out Devereux.

"Indeed, sir, I do *not* know the reason," answered the Rector.

"But you know—you *must*—you *meant*—you, at least, had heard some ill of me, and you no longer wish my suit to prosper."

"I have, indeed, of late, heard *much* ill of you, Captain Devereux," answered Dr. Walsingham, in a very deliberate but melancholy way, "enough to make me hold you no meet husband for any wife who cared for a faithful partner, or an honourable and a quiet home."

"You mean—I know you do—that Palmerstown girl, who has belied me?" cried Devereux.

"That unhappy young woman, Captain Devereux, her name is Glynn, whom you betrayed, under a promise of marriage."

That moment Devereux was on his feet. It was the apparition of Devereux; a blue fire gleaming in his eyes, not a word from his white lips, while three seconds might have ticked from Mrs. Irons' prosy old clock on the stair-head; his slender hand was outstretched in appeal and defiance, and something half celestial, half infernal—the fallen angelic—in his whole face and bearing.

"May my merciful Creator strike me dead, here at your feet, Doctor Walsingham, but 'tis a

lie," cried he. "I never promised—she'll tell you. I thought she told you long ago. 'Twas ~~that~~ devil incarnate, her mother, who forged the lie, why or wherefore, except for her fiendish love of mischief, I know not."

"I cannot tell, sir, about your promise," said the Doctor, gravely; "with or without it, the crime is heinous, the cruelty immeasurable."

"Doctor Walsingham," cried Dick Devereux, a strange scorn ringing in his accents, "with all your learning, you don't know the world; you don't know human nature; you don't see ~~what's~~ passing in this very village before your eyes, every day you live. I'm not worse than others; I'm not half so bad as fifty older fellows who ought to know better; but I'm *sorry*, and 'tisn't easy to say that, for I'm proud, as proud as the devil, as proud as you, and if it were to my Maker, what more can I say. I'm sorry, and if heaven forgives us when we repent, I think our wretched fellow-mortals may."

"Captain Devereux, I've nothing to forgive," said the parson, kindly.

"But I tell you, sir, this cruel, unmeaning separation, will be my eternal ruin," cried Devereux. "Listen to me—by heaven, you shall. I've fought a hard battle, sir. I've tried to forget her—to *hate* her—it won't do. I tell you, Dr. Walsingham, 'tis not in your nature to comprehend the intensity of my love—you can't. I don't

blame you. But I think, sir—I think I *might* make her like me, sir. They come at last, sometimes, to like those that love them so—so *desperately*: that may not be for me, 'tis true. I only ask to plead my own sad cause. I only want to see her—gracious heaven—but to see her—to show her how I was wronged—to tell her she can make me what she will—an honourable, pure, self-denying, devoted man, or leave me in the dark, alone, with nothing for it but to wrap my cloak about my head, and leap over the precipice”

“Captain Devereux, why will you doubt me? I’ve spoken the truth. I have already said I must not give your message; and you are not to suppose I dislike you, because I would fain have your faults mended.”

“Faults! have I? To be sure I have. So have you, more, sir, and worse than I maybe,” cried Devereux, wild again; “and you come here in your spiritual pride to admonish and to lecture, and to *insult* a miserable man, who’s better, perhaps, than yourself. You’ve heard ill of me? you hear I sometimes drink maybe a glass too much—who does not? you can drink a glass yourself, sir; drink more, and show it less than I maybe; and you listen to every damned slander that any villain, to whose vices and idleness you pander with what you call your alms, may be pleased to invent, and you deem yourself charitable; save us from such



charity! *Charitable*, and you refuse to deliver my miserable message: hard-hearted Pharisee!"

It is plain poor Captain Devereux was not quite himself—bitter, fierce, half mad, and by no means so polite as he ought to have been. Alas! as Job says, "ye imagine to reprove words; and the speeches of one that is desperate, which are as wind."

"Yes, hard-hearted, unrelenting, Pharisee." The torrent roared on, and the wind was up; it was night and storm with poor Devereux. "You who pray every day—oh, damnable hypocrisy—lead us not into temptation—you neither care nor ask to what courses your pride and obstinacy are driving me—your fellow-creature."

"Ah, Captain Devereux, you are angry with me, and yet 'tis not my doing; the man that is at variance with himself will hardly be at one with others. You have said much to me that is unjust, and, perhaps, unseemly; but I wo'n't reproach you, your anger and trouble make wild work with your words. When one of my people falls into sin, I ever find it is so through lack of prayer. Ah! Captain Devereux, have you not been of late remiss in the duty of private prayer?"

The Captain laughed, not pleasantly, into the ashes in the grate. But the doctor did not mind, and only said, looking upward—

"Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died."

There was kindness, and even tenderness, in the tone in which simple Dr. Walsingham spoke the appellative, brother; and it smote Devereux now, as sometimes happens with wayward fellows, and his better nature was suddenly moved.

"I'm *sorry*, sir—I am. You're too patient—I'm *very* sorry; 'tis like an angel—you're noble, sir, and I such an outcast. I—I wish you'd strike me, sir—you're too kind and patient, sir, and so pure—and how have I spoken to you? A *trial*, sir, if you *can* forgive me—one trial—my vice—you shall see me changed, a new man. Oh, sir, let me swear it. I *am*, sir—I'm reformed; don't believe me till you see it. Oh! good Samaritan, don't forsake me—I'm all one wound."

Well! they talked some time longer, and parted kindly.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

IN WHICH A CERTAIN TROUBLED SPIRIT WALKS.

MR. DANGERFIELD was at the Club that night, and was rather in spirits than otherwise, except, indeed, when poor Charles Nutter was talked of. Then he looked grave, and shrugged, and shook his head, and said—

“A bad business, sir; and where’s his poor wife?”

“Spending the night with us, poor soul,” said Major O’Neill, mildly, “and hasn’t an idaya, poor thing; and indeed, I hope, she mayn’t hear it.”

“Pooh! sir, she must hear it; but you know she might have heard worse sir, eh?” rejoined Dangerfield.

“True for you, sir,” said the Major, suspending the filling of his pipe to direct a quiet glance of significance at Dangerfield, and then closing his eyes with a nod.

And just at this point in came Spaight.

“Well, Spaight!”

“Well, sir.”

“You saw the body, eh?” and a dozen other interrogatories followed, as, cold and wet with melting snow, dishevelled, and storm-beaten—for

it was a plaguey rough night—the young fellow, with a general greeting to the company, made his way to the fire.

“’Tis a tremendous night, gentlemen, so by your leave I’ll stir the fire—and, yes, I seen him, poor Nutter—and, paugh, an ugly sight he is, I can tell you; here, Larry, bring me a rummer-glass of punch—his right ear’s gone, and a’most all his right hand—and screeching hot, do you mind—an’, phiew—altogether ’tis sickening—they fishes, you know—I’m a’most sorry I went in—you remember Dogherty’s whiskey shop in Ringsend—he lies in the back parlour, and wondrous little changed in appearance.”

And so Mr. Spaight with a little round table at his elbow, and his heels over the fender, sipped his steaming punch, and thawed inwardly and outwardly, as he answered their questions and mixed in their speculations.

Up at the Mills, which had heard the awful news, first from the Widow Macan, and afterwards from Pat Moran, the maids sat over their tea in the kitchen in high excitement and thrilling chat—“The poor master;” “oh, the poor man;” “oh, la, what’s that,” with a start and a peep over the shoulders; “and oh, dear, and how in the world will the poor little mistress ever live over the news,” and so forth, made a principal part of their talk. There was a good accompaniment of wind outside, and a soft pelting of snow on the

window panes, "and oh, my dear life, but wasn't it dark !"

Up went Moggy, with her thick-wick'd kitchen candle, to seek repose ; and Betty, resolving 'not to be long behind, waited only "to wash up her plates" and slack down the fire, having made up her mind, for she grew more nervous in solitude, to share Moggy's bed for that night.

Moggy had not been twenty minutes gone, and her task was nearly ended, when—" Oh, blessed saints !" murmurs Betty, with staring eyes, and dropping the sweeping-brush on the flags, she heard, or thought she heard, her master's step, which was peculiar, crossing the floor overhead.

She listened, herself as pale as a corpse, and nearly as breathless ; but there was nothing now but the muffled gusts of the storm, and the close soft beat of the snow, so she listened and listened, but nothing came of it.

" 'Tis only the vapours," said Betty, drawing a long breath, and doing her best to be cheerful ; and so she finished her labours, stopping every now and then to listen, and humming tunes very loud, in fits and starts. Then it came to her turn to take her candle and go up stairs ; she was a good half hour later than Moggy—all was quiet within the house—only the sound of the storm—the creak and rattle of its strain, and the hurly-burly of the gusts over the roof and chimneys.

Over her shoulder she peered jealously this

way and that, as with flaring candle she climbed the stairs. How black the window looked on the lobby, with its white patterns of snow flakes in perpetual succession sliding down the panes. Who could tell what horrid face might be looking in close to her as she passed, secure in the darkness and that drifting white lace veil of snow? So nimbly and lightly up the stairs climbed Betty, the cook.

If listeners seldom hear good of themselves, it is also true that peepers sometimes see more than they like; and Betty, the cook, as she reached the landing, glancing askance with ominous curiosity, beheld a spectacle, the sight of which nearly bereft her of her senses.

Crouching in the deep doorway on the right of the lobby, the cook, I say, saw something—a figure—or a deep shadow—only a deep shadow—or maybe a dog. She lifted the candle—she peeped under the candlestick: 'twas no shadow, as I live, 'twas a well-defined figure!

He was draped in black, cowering down low, with the face turned up. It was Charles Nutter's face, fixed and stealthy. It was only while the fascination lasted—while you might count one, two, three, deliberately—that the horrid gaze met mutually. But there was no mistake there. She saw the stern dark picture as plainly as ever she did. The light glimmered on his white eyeballs.

Starting up, he struck at the candle with his

hat. She uttered a loud scream, and flinging stick and all at the figure, with a great clang against the door behind, all was swallowed in instantaneous darkness; she whirled into the opposite bed-room she knew not how, and locked the door within, and plunged head-foremost under the bed-clothes, half mad with terror.

The squall was heard of course. Moggy heard it, but she heeded not; for Betty was known to scream at mice, and even moths. And as her door was heard to slam, as was usual in panics of the sort, and as she returned no answer, Moggy was quite sure there was nothing in it.

But Moggy's turn was to come. When spirits "walk," I've heard they make the most of their time, and sometimes pay a little round of visits on the same evening.

This is certain; Moggy was by no means so great a fool as Betty in respect of Hobgoblins, witches, banshees, pookas, and the world of spirits in general. She eat heartily, and slept soundly, and as yet had never seen the devil. Therefore, such terrors as she that night experienced were new to her, and I can't reasonably doubt the truth of her narrative. Awaking suddenly in the night, she saw a light in the room, and heard a quiet rustling going on in the corner, where the old white-painted press showed its front from the wall. So Moggy popped her head through her thin curtains at the side, and—blessed hour!—there she

saw the shape of a man looking into the press, the doors being wide open, and the appearance of a key in the lock, though she well knew the mistress had taken it away with her.

The shape was very like her master. The saints between us and harm! The glow was reflected back from the interior of the press, and showed the front part of the figure in profile with a sharp line of light. She said he had some sort of thick slippers over his boots, a dark coat, with the cape buttoned, and a hat flapping over his face; coat and hat, and all, sprinkled over with snow.

As if he heard the rustle of the curtain, he turned toward the bed, and with an awful ejaculation she cried, "Tis you, sir!"

"Don't stir, and you'll meet no harm," he said, and over he posts to the bedside, and he laid his cold hand on her wrist, and told her again to be quiet, and for her life to tell no one what she had seen, and with that she supposed she swooned away; for the next thing she remembered was listening in mortal fear, the room being all dark, and she heard a sound at the press again, and then steps crossing the floor, and she gave herself up for lost; but he did not come to the bedside any more, and the tread passed out at the door, and so, as she thought went down stairs.

In the morning the press was locked and the door shut, and the hall-door and back-door locked,



and the keys on the hall table, where they had left them the night before.

You may be sure these two ladies were thankful to behold the gray light, and hear the cheerful sounds of returning day; and it would be no easy matter to describe which of the two looked most pallid, scared, and jaded that morning, as they drank a hysterical dish of tea together in the kitchen, close up to the window, and with the door shut, discoursing, and crying, and praying over their tea-pot in miserable rivalry.

## CHAPTER XXV.

HOW AN EVENING PASSES AT THE ELMS, AND DR. TOOLE  
MAKES A LITTLE EXCURSION ; AND TWO CHOICE SPIRITS  
DISCOURSE, AND HEBE TRIPS IN WITH THE NECTAR.

UP at the Elms, little Lily that night was sitting in the snug, old-fashioned room, with the good old Rector. She was no better ; still in doctor's hands, and weak, but always happy with him, and he more than ever gentle and tender with her ; for though he never would give place to despondency, and was naturally of a trusting, cheery spirit, he could not but remember his young wife, lost so early ; and once or twice there was a look—an outline—a light—something, in little Lily's fair, girlish face, that, with a strange momentary agony, brought back the remembrance of her mother's stricken beauty and plaintive smile. But then his darling's gay talk and pleasant ways would reassure him, and she smiled away the momentary shadow.

And he would tell her all sorts of wonders, old-world gaieties, long before she was born ; and how finely the great Mr. Handel played upon the harpichord in the Music Hall, and how his talk was in German, Latin, French, English, Italian, and half-

a-dozen languages beside, sentence about; and how he remembered his own dear mother's dress when she went to Lord Wharton's great ball at the Castle—dear, oh! dear, how long ago that was! And then he would relate stories of banshees, and robberies, and ghosts, and hair-breadth escapes, and “rapparees,” and adventures in the wars of King James, which he heard told in his nonage by the old folk, long vanished, who remembered those troubles.

“And now, darling,” said little Lily, nestling close to him, with a smile, “you *must* tell me all about that strange, handsome Mr. Mervyn; who he is, and what his story.”

“Tut, tut! little rogue”——

“Yes, indeed, you must, and you will; you've kept your little Lily waiting long enough for it, and she'll promise to tell nobody.”

“Handsome he is, and strange, no doubt—it was a strange fancy that funeral. Strange, indeed,” said the Rector.

“What funeral, darling?”

“Why, yes, a funeral—the bringing his father's body to be laid here in the vault, in my church; it is their family vault. 'Twas a folly; but what folly will not young men do?”

And the good parson poked the fire a little impatiently.

“Mr. Mervyn—*not* Mervyn—that was his mother's name; but—see, you must not mention

it, Lily, if I tell you—*not* Mr. Mervyn, I say, but my Lord Dunoran, the only son of that disgraced and blood-stained nobleman, who, lying in gaol, under sentence of death for a foul and cowardly murder, swallowed poison, and so closed his guilty life with a tremendous crime, in its nature inexpiable. There, that's all, and too much, darling."

"And was it very long ago?"

"Why, 'twas before little Lily was born; and long before *that* I knew him—only just a little. He used the Tiled House for a hunting-lodge, and kept his dogs and horses there—a fine gentleman, but vicious, always, I fear, and a gamester; an overbearing man, with a dangerous cast of pride in his eye. You don't remember Lady Dunoran?—pooh, pooh, what am I thinking of? No, to be sure! you could not. 'Tis from her, chiefly, poor lady, he has his good looks. Her eyes were large, and very peculiar, like *his*—his, you know, are very fine. She, poor lady, did not live long after the public ruin of the family."

"And has he been recognised here? The townspeople are so curious."

"Why, dear child, not one of them ever saw him before. He's been lost sight of by all but a few, a very few friends. My Lord Castlemallard, who was his guardian, of course, knows; and to me he disclosed himself by letter; and we keep his secret: though it matters little who knows it, for it seems to me he's as unhappy as aught could

ever make him. The townspeople take him for his cousin, who squandered his fortune in Paris; and how is he the better of their mistake, and how were he the worse if they knew him for whom he is? 'Tis an unhappy family—a curse haunts it. Young in years, old in vice, the wretched nobleman who lies in the vault, by the coffin of that old aunt, scarcely better than himself, whose guineas supplied his early profligacy—alas! he ruined his ill-fated, beautiful cousin, and she died heart-broken, and her little child, both there—in that melancholy and contaminated house.”

So he rambled on, and from one tale to another, till little Lily's early bed-hour came.

I don't know whether it was Doctor Walsingham's visit in the morning, and the chance of hearing something about it, that prompted the unquiet Tom Toole to roll his cloak about him, and buffet his way through storm and snow, to Devereux's lodgings. It was only a stone's-throw; but even that, on such a night, was no trifle.

However, up he went to Devereux's drawing-room, and found its handsome proprietor altogether in the dumps. The little Doctor threw off his sleety cloak and hat in the lobby, and stood before the officer fresh and puffing, and a little flustered and dazzled after his romp with the wind.

Devereux got up and received him with a slight bow and no smile, and a “Pray take a chair, Doctor Toole.”

"Well, this *is* a bright fit of the dismals," said little Toole, nothing overawed. "May I sit near the fire?"

"Upon it," said Devereux, sadly.

"Thankee," said Toole, clapping his feet on the fender, with a grin, and making himself comfortable. "May I poke it?"

"Eat it—do as you please—anything—everything; play that fiddle (pointing to the ruin of Puddock's guitar, which the Lieutenant had left on the table), or undress and go to bed, or get up and dance a minuet, or take that pistol, with all my heart, and shoot me through the head."

"Thankee, again. A fine choice of amusements, I vow," cried the jolly Doctor.

"There, don't mind me, nor all I say, Toole. I'm, I suppose, in the vapours; but, truly, I'm glad to see you, and I thank you, indeed I do, heartily, for your obliging visit; 'tis very neighbourly. But, hang it, I'm weary of the time—the world is a dull place. I'm tired of this planet, and should not mind cutting my throat and trying a new star. Suppose we make the journey together, Toole; there is a brace of pistols over the chimney, and a fair wind for some of them."

"Rather too much of a gale for my taste, thanking you again," answered Toole with a cosy chuckle; "but, if *you're* bent on the trip, and can't wait, why, at least let's have a glass together before parting."

"With all my heart, what you will. Shall it be punch?"

"Punch be it. Come, hang saving; get us up a ha'porth of whiskey," said little Toole, gaily.

"Hallo, Mrs. Irons, madam, will you do us the favour to make a bowl of punch as soon as may be?" cried Devereux, over the banister.

"Come, Toole," said Devereux, "I'm very dismal. Losses and crosses, and deuce knows what. Whistle or talk, what you please, I'll listen; tell me anything; stories of horses, dogs, dice, snuff, women, cocks, parsons, wine—what you will. Come, how's Sturk? He's beaten poor Nutter, and won the race; though the stakes, after all, were scarce worth taking—and what's life without a guinea?—he's grown, I'm told, so confoundedly poor, 'quis pauper? avarus.' A worthy man was Sturk, and, in some respects, resembled the prophet, *Shylock*; but you know nothing of him—why the plague don't you read your Bible, Toole?"

"Well," said Toole, candidly, "I don't know the Old Testament as well as the New; but certainly, whoever he's like, he's held out wonderfully. 'Tis nine weeks since he met that accident, and there he's still, above ground; but that's all—just above ground, you see."

"And how's Cluffe?"

"Pooh, Cluffe indeed! Nothing ever wrong with him but occasional over-eating. Sir, you'd a laughed to-day had you seen him. I gave him

a bolus, twice the size of a gooseberry. 'What's this?' says he. 'A bolus,' says I. 'The devil,' says he; 'dia-bolus, then,' says I—hey? said I, 'well?' ha! ha! and by Jove, sir, it actually half stuck in his œsophagus, and I shoved it down like a bullet, with a probang; you'd a died a laughing, yet twasn't a bit too big. Why, I tell you, upon my honour, Mrs. Rebecca Chatterworth's black boy, only t'other day, swallowed a musket bullet twice the size, ha! ha!—he did—and I set him to rights in no time with a little powder."

"Gunpowder?" said Devereux, "And what of O'Flaherty? I'm told he was going to shoot poor Miles O'More."

"Ha, ha! hey? Well, I don't think either remembered in the morning what they quarrelled about," replied Toole; "so it went off in smoke, sir."

"Well, and how is Miles?"

"Why, ha, ha! he's back again, with a bill, as usual, and a horse to sell—a good one—the black one, don't you remember? He wants five and thirty guineas; 't isn't worth two pounds ten. 'Do you know anyone who wants him? I would not mind taking a bill, with a couple of good names upon it,' says he. Upon my credit I believe he thought I'd buy him myself. 'Well,' says I, 'I think I do know a fellow that would give you his value, and pay you cash besides,' says I. 'Twas as good as a play to see his face. 'Who is he?' says



he, taking me close by the arm. 'The knacker,' says I. 'Twas a bite for Miles; hey? ha, ha, ha!'

"And is it true old Tresham's going to join our club at last?"

"He! hang him! he's like a brute beast, and never drinks but when he's dry, and then small beer. But, I forgot to tell you, by all that's lovely, they do say the charming Magnolia—a fine bouncing girl that—is all but betrothed to Lieutenant O'Flaherty."

Devereux laughed, and thus encouraged, Toole went on, with a wink and a whisper.

"Why, the night of the ball, you know, he saw her home, and they say he kissed her—by Bacchus, on both sides of the face,—at the door there, under the porch; and you know, if he had not a right, she'd a-knocked him down."

"Psha! the girl's a Christian, and when she receives a smack on one cheek she turns the other. And what says the Major to it?"

"Why, as it happened, he opened the door precisely as the thing occurred; and he wished Lieutenant O'Flaherty good night, and paid him a visit in the morning. And they say 'tis all satisfactory; and—by Jove! 'tis good punch." And Mrs. Irons entered with a china bowl on a tray.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CONCERNING A SECOND HURRICANE THAT RAGED IN CAPTAIN DEVEREUX'S DRAWING-ROOM, AND RELATING HOW MRS. IRONS WAS ATTACKED WITH A SORT OF CHOKING IN HER BED.

AND the china bowl, with its silver ladle, and fine fragrance of lemon and old malt whiskey, and a social pair of glasses, were placed on the table by fair Mistress Irons ; and Devereux filled his glass, and Toole did likewise ; and the little Doctor rattled on ; and Devereux threw in his word, and finally sang a song. 'Twas a ballad, with little in the words ; but the air was sweet and plaintive, and so was the singer's voice :—

“ A star so high,  
In my sad sky,  
I've early loved and late ;  
A clear lone star,  
Serene and far,  
Doth rule my wayward fate.

Tho' dark and chill  
The night be still,  
A light comes up for me :  
In eastern skies  
My star doth rise,  
And fortune dawns for me.

And proud and bold,  
My way I hold ;  
For o'er me high I see,  
In night's deep blue,  
My star shine true,  
And fortune beams on me.

Now onward still,  
Thro' dark and chill,  
My lonely way must be ;  
In vain regret,  
My star will set,  
And fortune's dark for me.

And whether glad,  
Or proud, or sad,  
Or howsoe'er I be ;  
In dawn, or noon,  
Or setting soon,  
My star, I'll follow thee."

And so there was a pause and a silence. In the silvery notes of the singer there was the ring of a prophecy; and Toole half read its meaning. And himself loving a song, and being soft over his music, he remained fixed for a few seconds, and then sighed, smiling, and dried his light blue eyes covertly; and he praised the song and singer briskly; and sighed again, with his fingers on the stem of his glass. And by this time Devereux had drawn the window-curtain, and was looking across the river, through the darkness, towards the Elms, perhaps for that solitary distant light—his star—now blurred and lost in the storm. What-

ever his contemplations, it was plain, when he turned about, that the dark spirit was upon him again.

"Curse that punch," said he, in language still more emphatic. "You're like Mephistophilis in the play—you come in upon my quiet to draw me to ruin. 'Twas the devil, sir, sent you here, to kill my soul, I believe; but you shan't. *Drink*, will you?—ay—I'll give you a draught—a draught of *air* will cool you. Drink to your heart's content."

And to Tool's consternation up went the window, and a hideous rush of eddying storm and snow whirled into the room. Out went the candles—the curtains flapped high in air, and lashed the ceiling—the door banged with a hideous crash—papers, and who knows what beside, went spinning, hurry-scurry, round the room; and Toole's wig was very near taking wing from his head.

"Hey—hey—hey? holloo!" cried the Doctor, out of breath, and with his artificial ringlets frisking about his chops and eyes.

"Out, sorcerer—temptation begone—avaunt Mephistophilis—cauldron away?" thundered the Captain; and sure enough, from the open window, through the icy sleet, whirled the jovial bowl; and the jingle of the china was heard faint through the tempest.

Toole was swearing, in the whirlwind and darkness, like a trooper.

"Thank heaven! 'tis gone," continued Deve-

reux; "I'm safe—no thanks to you, though; and, hark ye, Doctor, I'm best alone; leave me—leave me, pray—and pray forgive me."

The Doctor groped and stumbled out of the room, growling all the while, and the door slammed behind him with a crash like a cannon.

"The fellow's brain's disordered — *delirium tremens*, and jump out of that cursed window, I wouldn't wonder," muttered the Doctor, adjusting his wig on the lobby, and then calling rather mildly over the banisters, he brought up Mrs. Irons with a candle, and found his cloak, hat, and cane; and with a mysterious look beckoned that matron to follow him, and in the hall, winking up towards the ceiling at the spot where Devereux might, at the moment be presumed to be standing—

"I say, has he been feverish or queer, or—eh?—any way humorsome or out of the way?" And then—"See now, you may as well have an eye after him, and if you remark anything strange, don't fail to let me know—d'ye see; and for the present you had better get him to shut his window and light his candles."

And so the Doctor, wrapped in his mantle, plunged into the hurricane and darkness; and was sensible, with a throb of angry regret, of a whiff of punch rising from the footpath, as he turned the corner of the steps.

An hour later, Devereux being alone, called to Mrs. Irons, and receiving her with a courteous gravity, he said—

"Madam, will you be so good as to lend me your Bible?"

Devereux was prosecuting his reformation, which, as the reader sees, had set in rather tempestuously, but was now settling in serenity and calm.

Mrs. Irons only said—

"My——?" and then paused, doubting her ears.

"Your *Bible*, if you please, madam."

"Oh?—oh! my Bible? I—to be sure, Captain, jewel," and she peeped at his face, and loitered for a while at the door; for she had unpleasant misgivings about him, and did not know what to make of his request, so utterly without parallel. She'd have fiddled at the door some time longer, speculating about his sanity, but that Devereux turned full upon her with a proud stare, and rising, he made her a slight bow, and said: "*I thank you, madam,*" with a sharp courtesy, that said: "*avaunt, and quit my sight!*" so sternly, though politely, that she vanished on the instant; and down stairs she marvelled with Juggy Byrne, "*what the puck the Captain could want of a Bible! Upon my conscience it sounds well. It's what he's not right in his head, I'm afeared. A Bible!*"—and an aerial voice seemed to say, "*a pistol,*" and another, "*a coffin,*"—"An' I'm sure I wish that quare little Lieutenant Puddock 'id come up and keep him company. I dunno' what's come over him."

And they tumbled about the rattletaps under

the cupboard, and rummaged the drawers in search of the sacred volume. For though Juggy said there was no such thing, and never had been in her time, Mrs. Irons put her down with asperity. It was not to be found, however, and the matron thought she remembered that old Mrs. Legge's cook had borrowed it some time ago for a charm. So she explained the accident to Captain Devereux, who said—

“I thank you, madam; 'tis no matter. I wish you a good night, madam;” and the door closed.

“No Bible!” says Devereux, “the old witch!”

Mrs. Irons, as you remember, never spared her rhetoric, which was fierce, shrill, and fluent, when the exercise of that gift was called for. The parish clerk bore it with a cynical and taciturn patience, not, perhaps, so common as it should be in his sex; and this night, when she awoke, and her eyes rested on the form of her husband at her bedside, with a candle lighted, and buckling on his shoes with his foot on the chair, she sat up straight in her bed, wide awake in an instant, for it was wonderful how the sight of that meek man roused the wife in her bosom, especially after an absence, and she had not seen him since four o'clock that evening; so you may suppose his reception was warm, and her expressions every way worthy of her feelings.

Meek Irons finished buckling that shoe, and then lifted the other to the edge of the chair, and

proceeded to do the like for it, serenely, after his wont, and seeming to hear nothing. So Mrs. Irons proceeded, as was her custom when that patient person refused to be roused—she grasped his collar near his cheek, meaning to shake him into attention.

But instantly, as the operation commenced, the clerk gripped her with his long, horny fingers by the throat, with a snap so sure and energetic that not a cry, not a gasp even, or a wheeze, could escape through “the trachea,” as medical men have it; and her face and forehead purpled up, and her eyes goggled and glared in her head; and her husband looked so insanely wicked, that, as the pale picture darkened before her, and she heard curse after curse, and one foul name after another hiss off his tongue, like water off a hot iron, in her singing ears, she gave herself up for lost. He closed this exercise by chucking her head viciously against the board of the bed half-a-dozen times, and leaving her thereafter a good deal more confused even than on the eventful evening when he had first declared his love.

So soon as she came a little to herself, and saw him coolly buttoning his leggings at the bedside, his buckles being adjusted by this time, her fear subsided, or rather her just indignation rose above it and drowned it; and she was on the point of breaking out afresh, only in a way commensurate with her wrongs, and proportionately more fer-



midable; when, on the first symptom of attack, he clutched her, if possible, tighter; the gaping, goggling, purpling, the darkening of vision and humming in ears, all recommenced; likewise the knocking of her head with improved good-will, and, spite of her struggles and scratching, the bewildered lady, unused to even a show of insurrection, underwent the same horrid series of sensations at the hands of her rebellious lord.

When they had both had enough of it, Mr. Irons went on with his buttoning, and his lady gradually came to. This time, however, she was effectually frightened—too much so even to resort to hysterics, for she was not quite sure that when he had buttoned the last button of his left legging he might not resume operations, and terminate their conjugal relations.

Therefore, being all of a tremble, with her hands clasped, and too much terrified to cry, she besought Irons, whose bodily strength surprised her, for her life, and his pale, malign glance, askew over his shoulder, held her with a sort of a spell that was quite new to her—in fact, she had never respected Irons so before.

When he had adjusted his leggings, he stood lithe and erect at the bedside, and with his fist at her face, delivered a short charge, the point of which was, that unless she lay like a mouse till morning he'd have her life, though he hanged for it. And with that he drew the curtain, and was hidden from her sight for some time,

## CHAPTER XXVII.

IN WHICH AN UNEXPECTED VISITER IS SEEN IN THE CEDAR-PARLOUR OF THE TILED HOUSE, AND THE STORY OF MR. BEAUCLERC AND THE "FLOWER DE LUCE" BEGINS TO BE UNFOLDED.

It was an awful night, indeed, on which all this occurred, and that apparition had shown itself up at the Mills. And truly it would seem the devil had business on his hands, for in the cedar-parlour of the Tiled House another unexpected manifestation occurred just about the same hour.

What gentleman is there of broken fortunes, undefined rights, and in search of evidence, without a legal adviser of some sort? Our Mr. Mervyn, of course, had his, and paid for the luxury according to custom. And every now and then off went a despatch from the Tiled House to the oracular London attorney; sometimes it was a budget of evidence, and sometimes only a string of queries. To-night, to the awful diapason of the storm, he was penning one of these—the fruit of a tedious study of many papers and letters,

tied up in bundles by his desk, all of them redolent of ominous or fearful associations.

I don't know why it is the hours fly with such a strange celerity in the monotony and solitude of such nightwork. But Mervyn was surprised, as many a one similarly occupied has been, on looking at his watch, to find that it was now long past midnight; so he threw himself back in his chair with a sigh, and thought how vainly his life was speeding away, and heard, with a sort of wonder, how mad was the roar of the storm without, while he had quietly penned his long rescript undisturbed.

The wild bursts of supernatural fury and agony which swell and mingle in a hurricane, I dare say, led his imagination a strange aerial journey through the dark. Now it was the baying of hell hounds, and the long shriek of the spirit that flies before them. Anon it was the bellowing thunder of an ocean, and the myriad voices of shipwreck. And the old house quivering from base to cornice under the strain; and then there would come a pause, like a gasp, and the thunder once more rolled up, and the same mad hubbub shook and clamoured at the windows.

So he let his Pegasus spread his pinions on the blast, and mingled with the wild rout that peopled the darkness; or, in plainer words, he abandoned his fancy to the haunted associations of the hour, the storm, and the house, with a not unpleasant

horror. In one of these momentary lulls of the wind, there came a sharp, distinct knocking on the window-pane. He remembered with a thrill the old story of the supernatural hand which had troubled that house, and began its pranks at this very window.

Ay, ay, 'twas the impatient rapping of a knuckle on the glass quite indisputably.

It is all very well weaving the sort of dream or poem with which Mervyn was half amusing and half awing himself, but the sensation is quite different when a questionable sound or sight comes uninvited to take the matter out of the province of our fancy and the control of our will. Mervyn found himself on his legs, and listening in a very real sort of horror, with his gaze fixed in the direction of that small sharp knocking. But the storm was up again, and drowning every other sound in its fury.

If Mr. Mervyn had been sufficiently frightened, he would have forthwith made good his retreat to his bed-room, or, if he had not been frightened at all, he would have kept his seat, and allowed his fancies to return to their old channel. But, in fact, he took a light in his hand, and opened a bit of the window-shutter. The snow, however, was spread over the panes in a white, sliding curtain, that returned the light of his candle, and hid all without. 'Twas idle trying to peer through it, but as he did, the palm of a hand was suddenly

applied to the glass on the outside, and began briskly to rub off the snow, as if to open a peep-hole for distinct inspection.

It was to be more this time than the apparition of a hand—a human face was immediately presented close to the glass—not that of Nutter either—no—it was the face of Irons—pale, with glittering eyes and blue chin, and wet hair quivering against the glass in the storm.

He nodded wildly to Mervyn, brushing away the snow, beckoning towards the back-door, as he supported himself on one knee on the window-sill, and, with his lips close to the glass, cried, “let me in;” but, in the uproar of the storm, it was by his gestures, imperfectly as they were seen, rather than by his words, that Mervyn comprehended his meaning.

Down goes Mr. Mervyn, without a moment’s hesitation, leaving the candle standing on the passage table, draws the bolts, opens the door, and in rushes Irons, in a furious gust, his cloak whirling about his head amidst a bitter eddying of snow, and a distant clapping of doors throughout the house.

The door secured again, Mr. Irons stood in his beflaked and dripping mantle, storm-tossed, dishevelled, and alone once again in the shelter of the Tiled House, to explain the motive of his visit.

“Irons! I could hardly believe it,” and he made

a pause, and then, filled with the one idea, he vehemently demanded, "In Heaven's name, have you come to tell me all you know?"

"Well, maybe—no," answered the clerk; "I don't know; I'll tell you something. I'm going, you see, and I came here on my way; and I'll tell you more than last time, but not all—not all yet."

"Going? and where?—what are your plans?"

"Plans?—I've *no* plans. Where am I going?—nowhere—anywhere. I'm going away, that's all."

"You're leaving this place—eh, to return no more?"

"I'm leaving it to-night; I've the Doctor's leave, Parson Walsingham. What d'ye look at, sir; d'ye think it's what I murdered any one? not but if I staid here I might though," and Mr. Irons laughed a frightened, half maniacal sort of laugh. "I'm going for a bit, a fortnight, or so, maybe, till things get quiet—(lead us not into temptation!)—to Mullingar, or anywhere; only I won't stay longer at hell's door, within stretch of that devil's long arm."

"Come to the parlour," said Mervyn, perceiving that Irons was chilled and shivering.

There, with the door and window-shutters closed, a pair of candles on the table, and a couple of faggots of that pleasant bog-wood, which blazes so readily and fragrantly on the hearth, Irons shook off his cloak, and stood, lank and grim, and, as it

seemed to Mervyn, horribly scared, but well in view, and trying, sullenly, to collect his thoughts.

"I'm going away, I tell you, for a little while; but I'm come to see you, sir, to think what I may tell you now, and, above all, to warn you again' saying to any living soul one word of what passed between us when I last was here; you've kept your word honourable as yet; if you break it I'll not return," and he clenched it with an oath, "*I darn't* return."

"I'll tell you the way it happened," he resumed. "'Tis a good while now—ay, twenty-two years; your noble father's dead these twenty-two years and upwards. 'Twas a bad murder, sir; they wor both bad murders. I look on it, *he's* a murdered man."

"He—who?" demanded the young man.

"Your father, sir."

"My father murdered?" said Mervyn.

"Well, I see no great differ; I see none at all. I'll tell you how it was."

And he looked over his shoulder again, and into the corners of the room, and then Mr. Irons began—

"I believe, sir, there's no devil like a vicious young man, with a hard heart and cool courage, in want of money. Of all the men I ever met with, or heard tell of, Charles Archer was the most dreadful. I used sometimes to think he *was* the devil. It wasn't longheaded or cunning he

was, but he knew your thoughts before you half knew them yourself. He knew what *every* one was thinking of. He made up his mind at a glance, and struck like a thunderbolt. As for pity or fear, he did not know what they were, and his cunning was so deep, and sure there was no catching him.

"He came down to the Pied Horse Inn, where I was a drawer, at Newmarket, twice."

Mervyn looked in his face, quickly, with a ghastly kind of start.

"Ay, sir, av coorse you know it; you read the trial; av coorse you did. Well, he came down there twice. 'Twas a good old house, sir, lots of room, and a well-accustomed inn. An' I think there was but two bad men among all the servants of the house—myself and Glascock. He was an under hostler, and a bad boy. He chose us two out of the whole lot, with a look. He never made a mistake. He knew us some way like a crow knows carrion, and he used us cleverly."

And Irons cursed him.

"He's a hard master, like his own," said Irons; "his wages come to nothing, and his service is hell itself. He could sing, and talk, and drink, and keep things stirring, and the gentlemen liked him; and he was, 'twas said, a wonderful fine player at whist, and piquet, and ombre, and all sorts of card-playing. So you see he could afford to play fair. The first time he came down, he



fought three duels about a tipsy quarrel over a pool of Pope Joan. There was no slur on his credit, though ; 'twas just a bit of temper. He wounded all three; two but trifling; but one of them—Chapley, or Capley, I think, was his name—through the lungs, and he died, I heard, abroad. I saw him killed—'twasn't the last; 'twas done while you'd count ten. Mr. Archer came up with a sort of a sneer, pale and angry, and 'twas a clash of the small-swords—one, two, three, and a spring like a tiger—and all over. He was frightful strong; ten times as strong as he looked—all a deception.

“ Well, sir, there was a Jew came down, offering wagers, not, you see, to gentlemen, sir, but to poor fellows. And Mr. Archer put me and Glascock up to bite him, as he said; and he told us to back Strawberry, and we did. We had that opinion of his judgment and his knowledge—you see, we thought he had ways of finding out these things—that we had no doubt of winning, so we made a wager of twelve pounds. But we had no money—not a crown between us—and we must stake gold with the host of the ‘Plume of Feathers;’ and the long and the short of it was, I never could tell how he put it into our heads, to pledge some of the silver spoons and a gold chain of the master's, intending to take them out when we won the money. Well, Strawberry lost, and we were left in the lurch. So we told Mr. Archer

how it was; for he was an off-handed man when he had anything in view, and he told us, as we thought, he'd help us if we lost. 'Help you,' says he, with a sort of laugh he had, 'I want help myself; I haven't a guinea, and I'm afraid you'll be hanged; and then,' says he, 'stay a bit, and I'll find a way.'

"I think he *was* in a bad plight just then himself; he was awful expensive with horses and—and—other things; and I think there was a writ, or maybe more, out against him, from other places, and he wanted a lump of money in his hand to levant with, and go abroad. Well, listen, and don't be starting, or making a row, sir," and a sulky, lowering, hangdog shadow, came over Irons. "Your father, Lord Dunoran, played cards; his partner was Mr. Charles Archer. Whist it was—with a gentleman of the name of Beauclerc, and I forget the other—he wore a chocolate suit, and a black wig. 'Twas I carried them their wine. Well, Mr. Beauclerc won, and Mr. Archer stopped playing, for he had lost enough; and the gentleman in the chocolate—what was his name?—Edwards, I think—ay, 'twas—*yes*, Edwards, it was—was tired, and turned himself about to the fire, and took a pipe of tobacco; and my lord, your father, played piquet with Mr. Beauclerc; and he lost a power of money to him, sir; and, by bad luck, he paid a great part of it, as they played, in rouleaus of

gold, for he had won at the dice down stairs. Well, Mr. Beauclerc was a little hearty, and he grew tired, and was for going to bed. But my lord was angry, and being disguised with liquor too, he would not let him go till they played more; and play they did, and the luck still went the same way; and my lord grew fierce over it, and cursed and drank, and that did not mend his luck you may be sure; and at last Mr. Beauclerc swears he'd play no more; and both kept talking together, and neither heard well what t'other said; but there was some talk about settling the dispute in the morning.

"Well, sir, in goes Mr. Beauclerc, staggering—his room was the Flower de luce—and down he throws himself, clothes an' all, on his bed; and then my lord turned on Mr. *Edwards*, I'm sure, that was his name, and persuades him to play at piquet; and to it they went.

"As I was coming in with more wine, I meets Mr. Archer coming out, 'Give them their wine,' says he, in a whisper, 'and follow me.' An' so I did. 'You know something of Glascock, and have a fast hold of him,' says he, 'and tell him quietly to bring up Mr. Beauclerc's boots, and come back along with him; and bring me a small glass of rum.' And back he goes into the room where the two were stuck in their cards, and talking and thinking of nothing else.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

IN WHICH MR. IRONS' NARRATIVE REACHES MERTON MOOR.

"WELL, I did as he bid me, and set the glass of rum before him, and in place of drinking it, he follows me out. 'I told you, says he, I'd find a way, and I'm going to give you fifty guineas apiece. Stand you at the stair-head,' says he to Glascock, 'and listen; and if you hear any one coming, step into Mr. Beauclerc's room with his boots, do you see, for I'm going to rob him,' I thought I'd a fainted, and Glascock, that was a tougher lad than me, was staggered; but Mr. Archer had a way of taking you by surprise, and getting you into a business before you knew where you were going. 'I see, sir,' says Glascock. 'And come you in, and I'll do it,' says Mr. Archer, and in we went, and Mr. Beauclerc was fast asleep.

"I don't like talking about it," said Irons, suddenly and savagely, and he got up and walked, with a sort of a shrug of the shoulders, to and fro half-a-dozen times, like a man who has a chill, and tries to make his blood circulate.

Mervyn commanded himself, for he knew the man would return to his tale, and probably all the

sooner for being left to work off his transient horror how he might.

“ Well, he did rob him, and I often thought how cunningly, for he took no more than about half his gold, well knowing, I’m now sure, neither he nor my lord, your father, kept any count; and there was a bundle of notes in his pocket-book, which Mr. Archer was thinning swiftly, when all of a sudden, like a ghost rising, up sits Mr. Beauclerc, an unlucky rising it was for him, and taking him by the collar—he was a powerful strong man—‘ You’ve robbed me, Archer,’ says he. I was behind Mr. Archer, and I could not see what happened, but Mr. Beauclerc made a sort of a start and a kick out with his foot, and seemed taken with a tremble all over, for while you count three, and he fell back in the bed with his eyes open, and Mr. Archer drew a thin long dagger out of the dead man’s breast, for dead he was. ‘ What are you afraid of, you —— fool?’ says he, shaking me up; ‘ I know what I’m about; I’ll carry you through; your life’s in my hands, mine in yours, only be cool.’ He was that himself, if ever man was, and quick as light he closed the dead man’s eyes, saying, ‘ in for a penny in for a pound,’ and he threw a bit of the coverlet over his breast, and his mouth and chin, just as a man might draw it rolling round in the bed, for I suppose he thought it best to hide the mouth that was open, and told its tale too plainly, and out he

was on the lobby the next instant. 'Don't tell Glasscock what's happened, 'twill make him look queer; let him put in the boots, and if he's asked, say Mr. Beauclerc made a turn in the bed, and a grumbling, like a man turning over in his sleep, while he was doing so, d'ye see, and divide this, 'twill settle your little trouble, you know.' 'Twas a little paper roll of a hundred guineas. An' that's the way Mr. Beauclerc came by his death."

This to Mervyn was the sort of shock that might have killed an older man. The dreadful calamity that had stigmatized and beggared his family—the horror and shame of which, he well remembered, when first revealed to him, had held him trembling and tongue-tied for more than an hour before tears came to his relief, and which had ever since blackened his sky, with a monotony of storm and thunder, was in a moment shown to be a chimera. No wonder that he was for a while silent, stunned, and bewildered. At last he was able—pale and cold—to lift up his clasped hands, his eyes, and his heart, in awful gratitude, to the Author of Mercy, the Revealer of Secrets, the Lord of Life and Truth.

"And where is this Charles Archer—is he dead or living?" urged Mervyn with an awful adjuration.

"Ay, where to catch him, and how—Dead? Well, he's dead to some, you see, and living to others; and living or dead, I'll put you on his

track some fine day, if you're true to me; but not yet a while, and if you turn stag, or name my name to living soul (and here Mr. Irons swore an oath such as I hope parish clerks don't often swear, and which would have opened good Dr. Walsingham's eyes with wonder and horror), you'll never hear word more from me, and I think, sir, you'll lose your life beside."

"Your threats of violence are lost on me, I can take care of myself," said Mervyn, haughtily.

The clerk smiled a strange sort of smile.

"But I've already pledged my sacred honour not to mention your name or betray your secret."

"Well, just have patience, and maybe I'll not keep you long; but 'tis no trifle for a man to make up his mind to what's before *me*, maybe."

After a pause, Irons resumed—

"Well, sir, you see, Mr. Archer sat down by the fire and smoked a pipe, and was as easy and pleased, you'd say, to look on him, as a man need be; and he called for cards when my lord wanted them, and whatever else he needed, making himself busy and bustling—as I afterwards thought, to make them both remember well that he was in the room with them."

"In and out of the chamber I went with one thing or another, and every time I passed Mr. Beauclerc's room I grew more and more frightened; and, truth to say, I was a scared man, and I don't know how I got through my business;

every minute expecting to hear the outcry from the dead man's room.

"Mr. Edwards had an appointment, he said—nothing good, you may be sure—they were a rake-helly set—saving your presence. Neither he nor my lord had lost, I believe, anything to signify to one another; and my lord, your father, made no difficulty about his going away, but began to call again for Mr. Beauclerc, and to curse him—as a half-drunk man will, making a power of noise; and, 'where's he gone to?' and, 'where's his room?' and, '—him, he shall play, or fight me.' You see, sir, he had lost right and left that time, and was an angry man, and the liquor made him half mad; and I don't think he knew rightly what he was doing. And out on the lobby with him swearing he should give him his revenge, or he'd know the reason why.

"'Where's Mr. Beauclerc's room?' he shouts to me, as if he'd strike me; I did not care a rush about that, but I was afraid to say—it stuck in my throat like—and I stared at Mr. Archer; and he calls to the chamber-maid, that was going up stairs, "Where does Mr. Beauclerc lie?" and she, knowing him, says at once, 'the Flower de luce,' and pointed to the room; and with that, my lord staggers up to the door, with his drawn sword in hand, bawling on him to come out, and fumbling with the pin, he could not open it; so he knocked it open with a kick, and in with him, and Mr. Archer



at his elbow, soothing him like; and I, I don't know how—behind him.

“By this time he had worked himself into a mad passion, and says he, ‘Curse your foxing—if you won't play like a man, you may die like a dog. I think 'twas them words ruined him, the chamber-maid heard them outside; and he struck Mr. Beaucherc half-a-dozen blows with the side of the small-sword across the body, here and there, quite unsteady; and, ‘hold, my lord, you've hurt him,’ cries Mr. Archer, as loud as he could cry. ‘Put up your sword for Heaven's sake,’ and he makes a sort of scuffle with my lord, in a friendly way, to disarm him, and push him away, and ‘throw down the coverlet and see where he's wounded,’ says he to me; and so I did, and there was a great pool of blood—we knew all about that—and my lord looked shocked when he seen it. ‘I did not mean that,’ says my lord; ‘but,’ says he, with a sulky curse, ‘he's well served.’

“I don't know whether Glascock was in the room or not all this while, maybe he was; at any rate, he swore to it afterwards; but you've read the trial, I warrant. The room was soon full of people. The dead man was still warm—'twas well for us. So they raised him up; and one was for trying one thing, and another another; and my lord was sitting stupid-like all this time by the wall; and up he gets, and says he, ‘I hope

he's not dead, but if he be, upon my honour, 'tis an accident—no more. I call Heaven to witness, and the persons who are now present, and pledge my sacred honour, as a peer, I meant no more than a blow or two.'

" 'You hear, gentlemen, what my lord says, he meant only a blow or two, and not to take his life,' cries Mr. Archer.

" So my lord repeats it again, cursing and swearing, like St. Peter in the judgment-hall.

" So, as nobody was meddling with my lord, out he goes, intending, I suppose, to get away altogether, if he could. But Mr. Underwood missed him, and he says, 'Gentlemen, where's my Lord Dunoran, we must not suffer him to depart?' and he followed him—two or three others going along with him, and they met him with his hat and cloak on, in the lobby, and he says, stepping between him and the stairs,—

" 'My lord, you must not go, until we see how this matter ends.'

" ' 'Twill end well enough,' says he, and without more ado, he walks back again.

" So you know the rest—*how* that business ended, at least for him."

" And you are that very Zekiel Irons who was a witness on the trial?" said Mervyn, with a peculiar look of fear and loathing fixed on him.

" The same," said Irons, doggedly; and after a pause, " but I swore to very little; and all I said

was true—though it wasn't the whole truth. Look to the trial, sir, and you'll see 'twas Mr. Archer and Glascock that swore home against my lord—not I. And I don't think myself, Glascock was in the room at all when it happened—so I don't."

"And where *is* that wretch, Glascock, and that double murderer, Archer; where *is he?*"

"Well, Glascock's making clay."

"What do you mean!"

"Under ground, this many a day. Listen: Mr. Archer went up to London, and he was staying at the Hummums, and Glascock agreed with me to leave the 'Pied Horse.' We were both uneasy, and planned to go up to London together; and what does he do—nothing less would serve him—but he writes a sort of letter, asking money of Mr. Archer under a threat. This, you know, was after the trial. Well, there came no answer; but, after a while—all on a sudden—Mr. Archer arrives himself at the 'Pied Horse;' I did not know then that Glascock had writ to him—for he meant to keep whatever he might get to himself. 'So,' says Mr. Archer to me, meeting me by the pump in the stable-yard, 'that was a clever letter you and Glascock wrote to me in town.'

"So I told him 'twas the first I heard of it.

"'Why,' says he, 'do you mean to tell me you don't want money?'

"I don't know why it was, but a sort of a turn came over me, and I said, '*no.*'

“ ‘Well,’ says he, ‘I’m going to sell a horse, and I expect to be paid to-morrow; you and Glascock must wait for me outside’—I think the name of the village was Merton—I’m not sure, for I never seen it before or since—‘and I’ll give you some money then.’

“ ‘I’ll have none,’ says I.

“ ‘What, no money?’ says he. ‘Come, come.’

“ ‘I tell you, sir, I’ll have none,’ says I. Something, you see, came over me, and I was more determined than ever. I was always afraid of him, but I feared him like Beelzebub now. ‘I’ve had enough of your money, sir; and I tell you what, Mr. Archer, I think ’tis best to end our dealings, and I’d rather, if you please, sir, never trouble you more.’

“ ‘You’re a queer dog,’ says he, with his eye fast on me, and musing for a while—as if he could see into my brain, and was diverted by what he found, there;—‘you’re a queer dog, Irons. Glascock knows the world better, you see; and as you and he are going up to London together, and I must give the poor devil a lift, I’ll meet you at the other side of Merton, beyond the quarry—you know the moor—on Friday evening, after dark—say seven o’clock—we must be quiet, you know, or people will be talking.’

“ ‘Well, sir, we met him, sure enough, at the time and place.’

## CHAPTER XXIX.

IN WHICH THE APPARITION OF MR. IRONS IS SWALLOWED  
IN DARKNESS.

"'TWAS a darkish night—very little moon—and he made us turn off the road, into the moor—black and ugly it looked, stretching away four or five miles, all heath and black peat, stretches of little broken hillocks, and a pool or tarn every now and again. An' he kept looking back towards the road, and not a word out of him. Well, I did not like meeting him at all if I could help it, but I was in dread of him; and I thought he might suppose I was plotting mischief if I refused. So I made up my mind to do as he bid me for the nonce, and then have done with him.

"By this time we were in or about a mile from the road, and we got over a low rising ground, and back nor forward, nor no way could we see anything but the moor; and I stopped all of a sudden, and says I, 'we're far enough, I'll go no further.'

"'Good,' says Mr. Archer; 'but let's go yonder, where the stones are—we can sit as we talk—for I'm tired.'

"There was half-a-dozen white stones there by

the side of one of these black tarns. We none of us talked much on that walk over the moor. We had enough to think of, each of us, I dare say.

“ ‘This will do,’ says Mr. Archer, stopping beside the pool; but he did not sit, though the stones were there. ‘Now, Glascock, here I am, with the price of my horse in my pocket, what do you want?’

“ ‘Well, when it came to the point so sudden, Glascock looked a bit shy, and hung his head, and rowled his shoulders, and shuffled his feet a bit, thinking what he’d say.

“ ‘Hang it, man; what are you afraid of? we’re friends,’ says Mr. Archer, cheerfully.

“ ‘Surely, sir,’ says Glascock, ‘I did not mean aught else.’

“ ‘And with that Mr. Archer laughed, and says he—

“ ‘Come—you beat about the bush—let’s hear your mind.’

“ ‘Well, sir, ’tis in my letter,’ says he.

“ ‘Ah, Glascock,’ says he, ‘that’s a threatening letter. I did not think you’d serve me so. Well, needs must when the devil drives.’ And he laughed again, and shrugs up his shoulders, and says he, putting his hand in his pocket, ‘there’s sixty pounds left; ’tis all I have; come be modest—what do you say?’

“ ‘You got a lot of gold off Mr. Beauclerc,’ says Glascock.

“‘Not a doit more than I wanted,’ says he, laughing again. ‘And who, pray, had a better right—did not I murder him?’

“His talk and his laughing frightened me more and more.

“‘Well, I stood to you then, sir; didn’t I?’ says Glascok.

“‘Heart of oak, sir—true as steel; and now how much do you want? Remember ’tis all I have—and I out at elbows; and here’s my friend Irons, too—eh?’

“‘I want nothing, and I’ll take nothing,’ says I; ‘not a shilling—not a halfpenny.’ You see there was something told me no good would come of it, and I was frightened besides.

“‘What! you won’t go in for a share, Irons?’ says he.

“‘No; ’tis your money, sir—I’ve no right to a sixpence—and I won’t have it,’ says I; ‘and there’s an end.’

“‘Well, Glascok, what say you?—you hear Irons.’

“‘Let Irons speak for himself—he’s nothing to me. You should have considered me when all that money was taken from Mr. Beauclerc—one done as much as another—and if ’twas no more than holding my tongue, still ’tis worth a deal to you.’

“‘I don’t deny—a deal—everything. Come—there’s sixty pounds here—but, mark, ’tis all I have—how much?’

“ ‘I’ll have thirty, and I’ll take no less,’ says Glascock, surly enough.

“ ‘Thirty!’ ’tis a good deal—but all considered, perhaps not too much,’ says Mr. Archer.

“ And with that he took his right hand from his breeches’ pocket, and shot him through the heart with a pistol.

“ Neither word, nor stir, nor groan, did Glascock make; but with a sort of a jerk, flat on his back he fell, with his head on the verge of the tarn.

“ I believe I said something—I don’t know—I was almost as dead as himself—for I did not think anything *that* bad was near at all.

“ ‘Come, Irons—what ails you—steady, sir—lend me a hand, and you’ll take no harm.’

“ ‘He had the pistol he discharged in his left hand by this time, and a loaded one in his right.

“ ‘ ’Tis his own act, Irons. *I* did not want it; but I’ll protect myself, and won’t hold my life on ransom, at the hands of a Jew or a Judas,’ said he, smiling through his black hair, as white as a tombstone.

“ ‘I am neither,’ says I.

“ ‘I know it,’ says he; ‘and so you’re *here*, and he *there*.’

“ ‘Well, ’tis over now, I suppose,’ says I. I was thinking of making off.

“ ‘Don’t go yet,’ says he, like a man asking a favour; but he lifted the pistol an inch or two,



with a jerk of his wrist, you must help me to hide away this dead fool.'

"Well, sir, we had three or four hours' cold work of it—we tied stones in his clothes, and sunk him close under the bank, and walled him over with more. 'Twas no light job, I can tell you, the water near four feet deep, though 'twas a dry season; and then we slipped out a handsome slice of the bank over him; and making him all smooth we left him to take his chance; and I never heard any talk of a body being found there; and I suppose he's now where we left him."

And Irons groaned.

"So we returned silent and tired enough, and I in mortal fear of him. But he designed me no hurt. There's luckily some risk in making away with a fellow, and 'tisn't done by any but a fool without good cause; and when we got on the road again, I took the London road, and he turned his back on me, and I don't know where he went; but no doubt his plans were well shaped.

"'Twas an ugly walk for me, all alone, over that heath, I can tell you. 'Twas mortal dark; and there was places on the road where my footsteps echoed back, and I could not tell but 'twas Mr. Archer following me, having changed his mind, maybe, or something as bad, if that could be; and many's the time I turned short round, expecting to see him, or may be thatother, behind, for you see I got a start like when he shot

Glascock; and there was a trembling over me for a long time after.

"Now, you see, Glascock's dead, and can't tell tales no more nor Mr. Beauclerc, and Doctor Sturk's a dead man too, you may say; and I think he knew—that is—brought to mind somewhat. He lay, you see, on the night Mr. Beauclerc lost his life, in a sort of a dressing-room, off his chamber, and the door was open; but he was bad with a fall he had, and his arm in splints, and he under laudanum—in a trance-like—and on the inquest he could tell nothing; but I think he remembered something more or less concerning it after." And Mr. Irons took a turn, and came back very close to Mervyn, and said very gently, "and I think Charles Archer murdered him."

"Then Charles Archer *has* been in Dublin, perhaps in Chapelizod, within the last few months," exclaimed Mervyn, in a sort of agony.

"I didn't say so," answered Irons. "I've told you the truth—'tis the truth—but there's no catching a ghost—and who'd believe my story? and them things is so long ago. And suppose I make a clean breast of it, and that I could bring you face to face with him, the world would not believe my tale, and I'd then be a lost man, one way or another—no one, mayhap, could tell how—I'd lose my life before a year, and all the world could not save me."

"Perhaps—perhaps Charles Nutter's the man;

and Mr. Dangerfield knows something of him," cried Mervyn.

Irons made no answer, but sat quite silent for some seconds, by the fire, the living image of apathy.

"If you name me, or blab one word I told you, I hold my peace for ever," said he, slowly, with a quiet oath, but very pale, and how blue his chin looked—how grim his smile, with his face so shiny, and his eyelids closed. You're to suppose, sir, 'tis possible Mr. Dangerfield has a guess at him. Well, he's a clever man, and knows how to put this and that together; and has been kind to Dr. Sturk and his family. He's a good man, you know; and he's a long-headed gentleman, they say; and if he takes a thing in hand, he'll be as like as another to bring it about. But, sink or swim, my mind's nigh made up. Charles Archer, wherever he is, will not like my going—he'll sniff danger in the wind, sir. I could not stay—he'd have had me—you see, body and soul. 'Twas time for me to go—and go or stay, I see nothing but bad before me. 'Twas an evil day I ever saw his face; and 'twould be better for me to have a cast for my life at any rate, and that I'm nigh-hand resolved on; only, you see, my heart misgives me—and that's how it is. I can't quite make up my mind."

For a little while Mervyn stood in an agony of irresolution. I'm sure I cannot understand all he felt, having never been, thank Heaven! in a like

situation. I only know how much depended on it, and I don't wonder that for some seconds he thought of arresting that lank, pale, sinister figure by the fire, and denouncing him as, by his own confession, an accessory to the murder of Beauclerc. The thought that he would slip through his fingers, and the clue to vindication, fortune, and happiness, be for ever lost, was altogether so dreadful that we must excuse his forgetting for a moment his promise, and dismissing patience, and even policy, from his thoughts.

But 'twas a transitory temptation only, and common sense seconded honour. For he was persuaded that whatever likelihood there was of leading Irons to the critical point, there was none of driving him thither; and that Irons, once restive and impracticable, all his hopes would fall to the ground.

"I am going," said Irons, with quiet abruptness; "and right glad the storm's up still," he added, in a haggard rumination, and with a strange smile of suffering. "In dark an' storm—curse him!—I see his face everywhere. I don't know how he's got this hold over me;" and he cursed him again, and groaned dismally. "A night like this is my chance—and so here goes."

"Remember, for Heaven's sake, remember," said Mervyn, with agonised urgency, as he followed him with a light along the passage to the back-door.

Irons made no answer; and walking straight on, without turning his head, only lifted his hand with a movement backward, like a man who silently warns another from danger.

So Irons went forth into the night and the roaring storm, dark and alone, like an evil spirit into desert places; and Mervyn barred the door after him, and returned to the cedar parlour, and remained there alone and long in profound and not unnatural agitation.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.









